

LITERATURE OF BENGAL



TO
RAI SHASHI CHANDRA DUTT BAHADUR
THE FOLLOWING PAGES

ARE DEDICATED AS
A TOKEN OF
GRATITUDE, ESTEEM AND AFFECTION

within Shashibazpur, }
1877.

BY HIS NEPHEW
THE AUTHOR.

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PREFACE TO THE REVISED EDITION.

ABOUT twenty years ago, I published in a local magazine a series of biographical and critical essays on Bengali writers, and they were published in a collected form under the disguise of a *nom de plume* in 1877. The publication did not receive much attention at the time, but it attracted the notice of that prince of Indian statisticians, Sir William Hunter. He embodied much of the information conveyed in my book in his valuable work on the *Indian Empire*, and he suggested that a more complete treatment of the subject should be attempted.*

The work of bringing out a more complete work on the subject has been deferred from year to year amidst other works which have claimed my more immediate attention. I do not regret this delay, as the information available on this subject is now far more satisfactory than it was twenty years ago. More attention is now given to

* "A complete treatment of the subject is still a desideratum, which it is hoped that Bengali research will before long supply. Mr. whose volume has been freely used in the following pages would confer a benefit both on his countrymen and on European students of the Indian vernaculars by undertaking the task." *W. W. Hunter's Indian Empire* (1886) p. 347, note.

the study of Bengali literature by the people of Bengal ; a *Bangiya Sahitya Parishad* or Academy of Bengali Literature has been formed, and has turned its attention to the restoration of the texts of our old authors ; and some excellent biographical works like the lives of Akhay Kumar Datta, Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar and Madhu Sudan Datta have lately been published in Bengali. These encouraging circumstances have reminded me of my duty,—long deferred,—of bringing out a fairly complete account of Bengali literature. And the honour which the *Bangiya Sahitya Parishad* has done me, by electing me its first President, impels me to choose this occasion to place before my countrymen generally, and before European students of Indian vernaculars, a connected story of literary and intellectual progress in Bengal during the last eight centuries.

It is necessary to say one or two words about my predecessors in this field. Iswar Chandra Gupta, the first great poet of this century, an account of whose life and work will be found in Chapter XIV. of the present book, was the first writer who attempted to publish biographical accounts of previous writers ; but his attempt necessarily met with imperfect success. Iswar Chandra was followed by other Bengali writers of lesser note, whose treatises used to be read in the last

generation. Pandit Ramgati Nyāyaratna then took up the task, and made enquiries into facts connected with the lives and writings of past authors, and produced a meritorious work a quarter of a century ago. The work has appeared in a second edition, but Bengal laments the recent death of the industrious and venerable Pandit. A number of separate biographical works, some of them very full and complete, have also been lately issued ; and I have in the present edition of this work derived much information from these separate works.

The additional information now available on the subject of Bengali literature, while it is most welcome to the compiler, has made the work of compilation more arduous. I had no idea, when I undertook to produce the present edition, that nearly all the work done twenty years ago would have to be redone. But as the work proceeded, this became more and more manifest. I have accordingly virtually rewritten most portions of the book, including the first five chapters as well as the last eight chapters, and I have added two new chapters on the schools of logic and law at Nabadwip. The work therefore may be regarded as almost a new one. The very limited time I had at my disposal did not permit me to perform this work as leisurely and carefully as I would

wish to do it ; but I hope nevertheless that the book will be found to be a readable hand-book, correct up to date, on the subject which it treats.

And the subject is one which is worth study. Literary movement in Bengal commenced at least eight centuries ago with compositions in Sanscrit, and Jayadeva, a native of Bengal, has left his mark on Sanscrit literature by his mortal song, now rendered into English by Sir Edwin Arnold. Bengali literature, properly so called, began with imitations of the song of Jayadeva in the fourteenth century, and with translations of the great Sanscrit epics into Bengali in the fifteenth century. Then followed the brilliant sixteenth century with its religious reform inaugurated by Chaitanya, and its study of philosophy and sacred law fostered by Raghunath and Raghunandan. The seventeenth century commenced with a great original composition by Mukunda Ram, whom Professor E. B. Cowell of Cambridge delights to call the Chaucer of Bengal. And the eighteenth century produced Bharat Chandra a master of verse, and Ram Prasad a master of song. A brighter epoch opened with the nineteenth century ; Raja Ram Mohan Rai was the first brilliant product of English education in India, and devoted his life to religious reform and to the formation of a healthy Bengali Prose. Iswar Chandra Gupta

was a versatile poet and satirist, and Akhay Kumar and Vidyasagar continued the noble work which Raja Ram Mohan had commenced. The great Madhu Sudan Datta wrote a noble epic in blank verse; Dina Bandhu Mitra and others wrote dramatic works, and Bankim Chandra Chatterjea has created a new school of fiction, and has brought Bengali prose to the state of its present perfection and grace.

These are the greatest authors that Bengal has produced, and whose memory the people of Bengal love to cherish. Of living writers I have not given any detailed account ; the time for a proper criticism of their work has not yet come. Let us hope that they will be the pioneers in literature in the next century, and that Bengal will shew as brilliant a record of progress in the next century as in this, which is about to close.

CUTTACK, }
October, 1895. }

R. C. DUFF.

LITERATURE OF BENGAL

CHAPTER I

BENGALI LANGUAGE AND ALPHABET.

It is not difficult to trace the gradual changes in the spoken tongue of Northern India by the help of the ancient works which have been preserved in Sanscrit. In India, as elsewhere, political and religious changes have been attended,—not with sudden changes in the spoken tongue, as is sometimes imagined,—but with a sudden recognition of such changes which introduce themselves slowly enough.

When the vigorous colonists of the Epic Age left their mother country in the Punjab behind, and founded powerful kingdoms along the Ganges and the Juma, the Sanscrit of the *Rig Veda* was replaced by the Sanscrit of the *Brahmanas* and *Upanishads* in the cultured courts of the Kurus and the Panchalas, the Videhas and the Kosalas. This was the first change of which we have any recorded evidence, and we may roughly fix the date of this change at 1500 B. C.

With the rise of Magadha and the advent of Gautama Buddha, who preferred to preach to nations in the spoken tongue, the Pali language was recognized as the spoken tongue of Northern India; it had replaced the Sanscrit of the *Brahmanas* and *Upanishads*. Scholars generally agree

with Burnouf and Lassen that the Pali stands "on the first step of the ladder of departure from Sanscrit, and is the first of the series of dialects which break us that rich and fertile language." The date of the literary and general recognition of the Pali language may be roughly fixed at 500 B. C.

In the centuries following the Christian Era, the Pali became gradually replaced by the Prakrits, the spoken dialects of the people. The heroines of Kalidasa speak Prakrit; and while Dushyanta makes love in Sanscrit, the beautiful Sakuntala responds to his love in the softer Prakrit. Vararuchi, one of the "nine gems" of Vikramaditya's court, is the earliest grammarian who recognizes the Prakrits in his grammar; and he distinguishes four distinct dialects of the Prakrit, *viz.*, *Maharashtri*, *Sauraseni*, *Paisachi* and *Magadhi*. We may fix the date of this literary recognition of the Prakrit dialects at 500 A. D.

The different Prakrits have been modified into the different spoken dialects of modern India. It is probable that the *Maharashtri* and *Sauraseni* Prakrits have been modified into the modern Hindi, and that the *Magadhi* Prakrit has been modified into the modern Bengali. Hindi received literary recognition in the twelfth century after Christ, the Bengali in the fourteenth century.

If we take up any large number of colloquial Bengali words derived from the Sanscrit, we shall invariably find in them traces of the Prakrit. If we take up any sentence at random from our every-day conversation, we shall find that most of the words have been

derived from the Sanscrit, through the Prakrit. We subjoin in a foot-note a list of words, furnished by Pandit Ramgati Nyayaratna, which will shew at a glance that the Bengali language is immediately derived from the Prakrit.*

The Bengali language is thus a descendant of Sanscrit, the mother of languages. It should be remembered however that a large number of local words, which were probably used in Bengal before the Aryans asserted their possession and spread their language in

সংস্কৃত	প্রাকৃত	বঙ্গালী	সংস্কৃত	প্রাকৃত	বঙ্গালী
ভূম্	ভূনম্	ভূমি	বৃক্ষ	বুড়	বুড়
অহম্	অহমি	আমি	মোহ	মোট	মোটা
লবণ	লোণ	লুন	ভজ	ভজ	ভাজ
প্রস্থর	পথর	পাথর	রান	রান	নাহা
শ্রগান	মদান	মদান	মধ্য	মধ্য	মধ্য
বৃহ	বর	বর	উপদ্যায়	উপদ্যায়	উদ্য
বৃক্ষ	বজ	বাঁজ	বটি	বটনী	বাঁজি
চক্ৰ	চক	চাকা	ভবতি	হোই	হব
কথ্য	কজ	কাস	করোতি	করই	কবে
অম্বা	অজ	আজ	ব্যক্তি	বোনই	বলে
মিথ্যা	মিঠা	মিছা	ক্রীণতি	কিণই	কেনে
বহন	বজ	বাহা	বন্ধতে	বন্ধুই	বাঁড়
কাশালপ	কাহাবন	কাহণ	অবতে	অবনি	অবরে
হব	হব	হাতি	বৃষ্টি	বজই	বাঁড়ে
বিজ্ঞান	বিজ্ঞানী	বিজ্ঞানী	কবরতি	কহই	কহে
পত্নী	পাতা	পাতা	অস্তি	অজি	অগে
বাহিঃ	বাহির	বাহির	কিপতি	কেনাতি	কেনে
বধু	বদ	বৌ	পঠতি	পড়ই	পড়ে
চন্দ্র	চন্দ	চাঁদ	পততি	পড়ই	পড়ে
মধ্য	মজ	মাজ	মুদ্রতি	মদানি	মলে

this country, have found their way into the Bengali tongue. Many familiar Bengali words connected with fishing and cultivation, with manufacture and arts, with domestic life and occupations, cannot be traced to Sanscrit roots, and must be of indigenous origin. With the growth of literature however, these words have a tendency to disappear, and the Bengali language is gradually approximating to the Sanscrit in various ways.

This process is specially observable in the present century. Whoever has taken pains to compare the best works of the present age with the works of the last century, must have observed that the Sanscrit element has greatly increased in the Bengali of the present day; and this change,—and we consider it a change in the right direction,—is attributable to a variety of causes. The spread of European culture created the necessity of a prose literature. Our writers began to be familiarized with ideas which could not find expression in verse. Philosophy and the sciences came within the category of public tuition, and were learnt by an ever-increasing circle of students; and when they wanted to give expression to their ideas in their native tongue they found out its inadequacy. Philosophy and the sciences were in past centuries cultivated in the academies of Nuddea, but they were cultivated in Sanscrit, only by a few, and those few never conceived the idea of popularizing and spreading such knowledge. A more liberal spirit however was imbibed in this century from the West, and those who imbibed such notions were led to spread and popularize the knowledge they had

obtained. One of the first and foremost too who received such notions was the great Raja Ram Mohan Rai, whose life was devoted to religious reform as well as to the spread of knowledge; and Raja Mohan Rai is *the father of Prose Literature in Bengal*.

It was then that two great authors, Akkhay Kumar Datta and Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar, took up the subject; and it may be asserted truly that as Ram Mohan Rai formed the prose literature of Bengal, Akkhay Kumar and Iswar Chandra gave it its classical dress. They had few or no instruments to work with, they had no style before them on which to base their own, none to follow or imitate. Under such circumstances they turned their eyes to the Sanskrit language. That wonderful language is the richest in the world in its capacity for the formation of new terms from known roots; and the twin workers borrowed vastly from this store and developed Bengali prose.

Since that time the same causes have continued to operate. New ideas are daily imported from the West, and are entering into the spirit of our literature. We seek in vain for expressions suited to such ideas in our older works, and we naturally turn more and more to the Sanscrit; and borrow from that language. Michael Madhu Sudan, the greatest poet of the century, borrowed largely from Sanscrit. And Bankim Chandra, the greatest master of the Bengali prose, simplified the classical style of Akkhay Kumar and Vidyasagar and made it more pliable and graceful, but his indebtedness to Sanscrit was not less than that of his predeces-

sors. A comparison of a poem of the present century with one of the past century will at once indicate the difference.

We open a book before us at random, and find a poem entitled উষা in the *Shaban* number of the *Banga-Darsan*, 1280 B. E.* It begins thus :

অধিষ্ঠি নন্দিনী, উষা বিনোদিনী,
প্রসূর বসন্ত, মধুর জ্যোতির্বা,
স্বলোক বসন্ত, কুসুম মালিনী,
এস তুমি দেবি, অবনীতলে ।

With the exception of two words only, এস and তুমি, all the rest are Sanscrit words.

We turn over a few pages and come to another poem entitled দেবদ্বিজ in the *Bhadra* number. It begins thus :

কোন মহানতি মানব সম্ভব,
বুদ্ধিতে বিবিধ শাসন বিধান,
অদীত হইল বাসদাননে,
অবলী ভাষিবা স্বরস আনন্দে,
প্রাণেদি দেখিব দেবতা নিচয়ে,
দেব পুরন্দর, রবি, চন্দ্রাশন,
সাত্য, হরি, হর, সরস বাহন,
দেখিব আবিহে কারণ মলে ।

In these eight lines there are only four words which are not Sanscrit, কোন, বুদ্ধিতে, হইল and দেখিব. All the other words are Sanscrit, though some of them have Bengali terminations. The four words above mentioned are of course derived from Sanskrit roots.

* This portion was written in July 1874, and the quotations therefore are from the *Banga-Darsan* of 1280 B. E.

The *Aswin* number has no poetry, and we therefore turn to the *Kartik* number. The poem on *naty* begins thus :

কহে বস সূর্য্য তেজে,
অনন্ত অকাল মগ্ননে,
যথা ত্রাত্তে মেঘবানি,
হানিধা বিকট হাসি,
বিকলি বলে ।

In these lines only two words *ত্রেজ* and *বিকলি* are not Sanscrit. The terminations are Bengali of course.

In the seventeen lines which we have quoted above, there are only eight words which are not Sanscrit. We now turn to the poetry of the last century, and select a passage at random from Bharat Chandra's *Annada Mangal* :

কহে সখী জয়া শুভ পৌ অজয়া
এ কি কর ঈশ্বরালি ।
ক্রোধে করি কর বাবে নাপ ঘর
খেয়াতি হবে কলিগালি ।
মিছা ক্রোধ করি আপনি প্যাসেতি
কি কর ছাবরি খেলা ।
তুব মোক্ষ ধার অরপূর্ণা নাম
সংসার সাগর ভেলা ।
অরপূর্ণা হয়ে অহ বেহ করে
দাঁড়াবে কাহার কাছে ।
হেখিয়া কালগালি সবে দিবে গালি
বহিতে না দিবে মাছে ।
জননীৰ আগে যানে পিতৃবাসে
ভাজে দিবেন দল ডাক্তা ।
বাৎস না ভিজাসে মায়ে না বস্তাবে
যদি দেখে লক্ষীছাড়া ।

Our readers will see at a glance that most of the words in this passage are non-Sanscrit, although mostly derived from Sanscrit roots.

We have dwelt at some length on this change because it is a change of which we should take note. The Bengali language, though undoubtedly derived through the Prakrit, seems to be fast divesting itself of the Prakrit forms, and approximating to the Sanscrit. The modern tendency is to use Sanscrit words rather than their Prakrit forms in all works of literature, except dramas and light fiction. To select some words from Pandit Nyayaratna's list, we prefer *শ্রুত* to *শাশ্বত*, *বুধ* to *যত*, *ভক্ত* to *বাহ্য*, *চক্ৰ* to *চাকা*, *কার্য* to *কাজ*, *অগ্নি* to *আগ্নি*, *মিথ্যা* to *মিছা*, *বন্য* to *বাহ্য*, *হস্ত* to *হাত*, *বিদ্বান্* to *বিদ্বানী*, *বৃদ্ধ* to *বুড়া*, *জান* to *নাহা* in our literary works. The literary language is thus undergoing a transformation under our own eyes.

It would be a mistake however to suppose that we are imitating Sanscrit ideas. The reverse is rather the case, our notions, our ideas, our ways of thinking, our style of writing are day by day diverging from the classical Sanscrit model, and tending towards the European. It is words only that we are borrowing from the Sanscrit. Thus, at the same time, we are borrowing from two widely different sources.

We have now briefly indicated the origin of the Bengali language and its development in modern times. It remains now to make a few remarks with regard to the Bengali alphabet.

A cursory examination of the Bengali alphabet will convince our readers that it is derived and simplified from the Devanagari alphabet. This modification was made many centuries ago, and all that exists of Bengali literature from the time of Chandi Das and Kasiram Das was recorded in this modern Bengali alphabet.

But this does not take us to the origin of the Indian alphabet. The Devanagari character itself is of comparatively recent origin. The oldest Indian character known is not the Devanagari, but the older one in which Asoka's inscriptions are recorded. All the inscriptions of Asoka, except those in the Punjab, are recorded in what is called the *Indo-Pali* or *South Asoka* character. This is the earliest character used in India of which we have any knowledge now, and its date is the date of Asoka, *viz.*, the third century before Christ.

The late General Sir Alexander Cunningham, who was the greatest authority on the subject of the Indian alphabets, subjected the old *Indo-Pali* character to a careful examination, and came to the conclusion that this Indian character was of purely Indian origin.* And the majority of scholars who have studied and discussed the subject are of the same opinion. Professor Max Müller holds that India had no written alphabet before the fifth century B.C., and that the Indian alphabet was then borrowed from the West. But Dr. Roth expresses his conviction, based on prolonged Vedic studies, that the vast collection of Vedic hymns could

* See Cunningham's remarks on this subject quoted in my *Civilisation in Ancient India* (London, 1893) Vol. II., p. 25, *et seq.*

not possibly have depended for existence on oral transmission, and he considers it as a *sine quâ non* that writing was known in Vedic times. Dr. Bühler holds that the Indian alphabet with its five nasals and three sibilants must have been developed in the grammatical schools of the Brahmans. Dr. Goldstücker holds that writing was known when the Vedic hymns were composed. And the profound scholar Lassen maintains that the *Indo-Pali* alphabet is of purely indigenous Indian origin.

It would appear therefore that some alphabet was formed and developed in India in the Vedic times; that probably a later modification of this alphabet is the *Indo-Pali* character in which Asoka recorded his inscriptions in the third century B. C.; that the ornate *Devanagari* character was a later development of the simpler and older Indo Pali character; and that the *Bengali* character is a simplification and later modification of the *Devanagari* character.

CHAPTER II.

EARLY SANSKRIT POETRY.—JAYADEVA.

A GREAT development in Sanskrit literature and learning took place between the sixth and eighth centuries of the Christian Era, and all the writers who are known as Classical Sanskrit poets, and whose works are still popular in all parts of India, appear to have flourished in this age. Kalidasa took the lead, probably in the sixth century, in poetry and in drama, and was immediately succeeded by Bharavi. Harshadeva, Dandin, Banabhatta, Subandhu and Bhartṛihari wrote dramas, fiction and poetry in the seventh, and the immortal Bhavabhūti closed the bright list in the eighth.* Classical poetry ends with him, imitators and feeble writers rose later on. Such were Magha who wrote *Śiṣupālavadha* in the eleventh century, and Viśakhā Datta who composed *Mudra Rākṣasa* when the Musalmans were already in India.

Bengal does not come to notice by her literary work till this late period. It is said that Bhaṭṭa Narayana, who composed *Vaṇī Saundarya* was one of the Brahmans who came to Bengal from Kanauj in the time of king Adisura, but we know little of the king and less of the poet. And it is also said that Śrī Harsha who composed *Naiṣhadha* in the twelfth century lived in Bengal, al-

* For an account of Classical Sanskrit Poetry, Drama and Fiction see my *Civilization in Ancient India*, (London, 1893) Vol. II., pages 258 to 362.

though according to Rajasekhara he was born in Benares.

The earliest poet whom we can claim to be a true son of Bengal is Jayadeva, the composer of the immortal song *Gita Govinda*; and we will devote the present chapter to an account of the life and works of this earliest poet of Bengal. He was a poet of the court of Lakshmana Sena, and flourished in the twelfth century, as has been proved by a colophon of an ancient copy of his poem discovered by Dr. Bühler in Kashmir. There is other evidence corroborating this fact. Jayadeva himself speaks of his contemporaries in his poetry; Bidyapati and Chandida, poets of the fourteenth century, acknowledge Jayadeva to be their great predecessor; and Sanatana, a learned Vaishnava writer of the sixteenth century, speaks of Jayadeva as a poet of Lakshmana Sena's time.

Very little is known of the life of this, the earliest poet of Bengal. He was born in Kendubilwa, better known as Kenduli, in the district of Birbhum. His father's name was Bhojadeva, and his mother's Ramedri. In early life Jayadeva left home, and it is said, began preaching the faith and love of Krishna. He had a few pupils and followers, and it is asserted that he attempted to establish a reformed religion like what Chaitanya did four centuries later. All this, however, we must accept with caution. Much of what little we know of Jayadeva is from Vaishnava writers, and they were naturally anxious to discover and establish a resemblance between so great a poet and their great Master. That Jayadeva's faith in Krishna

was ardent and deep, is amply shewn in his great work ; that the same fervour was shared, not only by a few friends of his, but by a large portion of the people at large, is also highly probable ; but that he began preaching the faith of Krishna like Chaitanya is perhaps the unfounded supposition of later Vaishnava writers.

After passing a few years in devotion and study, Jayadeva married and settled down in his native village. The daily routine of home life was however ill adapted to the feelings of the ardent poet, and he left home once more and travelled through northern India as far as Vrindavan and Jaypur, to which latter place he seems to have been invited by the king. Nothing more is known of the poet than that he survived his wife Padmavati, and that he passed his last days in devotions in his native village, where his tomb is yet to be seen surrounded by beautiful groves and trees.

The little that is known of the life of the poet is so mixed up with fables, that it is impossible at this distance of time to glean the truth from the falsehood. Such fables, however, are often based on true facts or circumstances ; anyhow they represent the impressions of later ages regarding the life and times of their subject. As such, some of them may with propriety find a place in this brief sketch.

A curious story is connected with the marriage of Jayadeva with Padmavati. A certain childless Brahman, after many prayers and devotions, was favored by the god Jagannatha with an only girl, whom the father named

Padmarati and nursed with affection and care. When she attained her youth, her father was taking her to the god, intending to devote her to his services. In the way however he dreamt a dream, and the god told him to give his child in marriage to a certain devout follower of his, named Jayadeva. The Brahman did as this match-making god commanded. Jayadeva, then leading a life of study and devotions, was unwilling to encumber himself with a wife; but the girl would not leave him, and said she would follow him through life though forsaken. "One must love partridge very well to accept it when thrown in one's face," the sort of feeling one would naturally feel under such circumstances, but our poet knew better; he rewarded her persistent affections with marriage, and they made a very affectionate and happy couple ever after in life.

The death of Padmarati furnishes us with another story. She is said to have been so affectionate a wife that a false rumour of her husband's death caused her death. Such virtue however dwelt in the name of Krishna, that the poet no sooner muttered that name than his spouse woke to life again.

The most celebrated story however, connected with the poet's life, is that relating to the composition of a certain passage in the 10th *Sarga* of the *Gita Govinda*. The passage occurs where Krishna is represented as pacifying the wrath of Radhika, who had been offended with him for his promiscuous love, and had assumed a contemptuous silence towards him. *যদ শিরসি যতনঃ দেহি পদপদ্মবদুসার* means, "On my head, as an ornament, place your beauti-

ous feet,"—these words being a touching appeal which an offended mistress seldom resists. When Jayadeva composed this, he looked on Krishna as an ardent lover; but after he had written the first portion, *viz.*, "On my head, as an ornament," he remembered that Krishna was a god as well; and he hesitated to add any thing about a human foot being placed on the head of a deity. Filled with doubts the poet went to bathe in the river. Soon after Padmavati saw her husband return and ask for his meals. The breakfast was produced and finished, and then he went to the room where the *Gita Govinda* was kept, and wrote something. After her husband had finished his meals, the duteous wife finished hers, when lo! her husband came in again and called for breakfast. The worthy dame certainly did not relish this unseasonable joke, but her husband was obstinate, and asserted that he had only then returned from his bath and had not yet taken his meals. The confusion of poor Padmavati would have been complete, but she stated that he had just before added something to his book. The book was examined, and what was the poet's surprise when he found that after the words, "On my head, as an ornament," which he had written before, the words "place thy beauteous feet" had been added. The mystery was soon cleared up. The god Krishna had marked the doubts which had arisen in the mind of his votary, and had solved the difficulty by personally assuming the shape of Jayadeva, coming into his house, and writing the passage himself.

There is more in this story than at first sight meets

the eye. The real hesitation felt at the passage was not by Jayadeva, but by later Vaishnavas who regarded Krishna as God, and the story was invented to explain away the poet's audacity.

It is said, that the king of Nilachala was offended at the widely spreading fame of Jayadeva, and wrote a book on the same subject and challenged comparison. Learned Pandits, unable or unwilling to decide the question, placed both the volumes at the temple of Jagannatha, calling upon the deity to decide it. It is said that the deity held the volume of Jayadeva on his breast, and threw away the work of king Satwika. Posterity has sufficiently vindicated the critical powers of the deity. Centuries have rolled away and the fame of Jayadeva remains undiminished, and will continue to remain so as long as the Sanscrit language is not forgotten.

Centuries have rolled away since the death of Jayadeva, and yet to the present day an annual fair is held at Kenduli by the Vaishnavas in memory of the departed poet. At this fair, fifty or sixty thousand men assemble round the tomb of Jayadeva for worship, and the Vaishnavas still sing of the amours of Krishna and Radhika immortalized in the *Gita Govinda*.

The Bengali was no doubt the spoken tongue of Bengal at the time of Jayadeva, as it is now. But the learned and the *élite* still considered the Sanscrit tongue as their noble heritage, and authors vied with each other in writing in this language. All learned works, therefore, all speeches in court, all traditional and genea-

logical fables, were composed and recited in Sanscrit. Learned Brahmins carried on their investigations in this learned language, and poets, desirous of ingratiating themselves with kings, composed and pronounced stiff artificial poetry in a dead language. It was thus that the Italians of the age of Dante and Boccaccio wrote in Latin; it was thus that Anglo-Saxon writers of the time of the great Alfred made feeble attempts in the language of Rome. All attempts in a foreign tongue or in a dead tongue must necessarily be feeble; and thus, with the single exception of Jayadeva's works, all compositions of the twelfth century have been forgotten, and deservedly forgotten.

The *Gita Govinda*, however, is an exception, and a noble exception. It is a book of songs on the amours of Krishna and Radhika, divided into twelve *Sargas* or Cantos, each *Sarga* being divided into several *Prabandhas*, and each *Prabandha* consisting of several verses. The first thing that strikes the reader in this poem is the exquisite music of the songs. One would suppose the sonorous and somewhat artificial Sanscrit language was unsuited to so much softness and melody; but it is a master hand that wakes the lyre, and the ear is pleased and ravished with a flood of the softest music before one comprehends the sense. In the hand of a *Bengali* poet the Sanscrit language loses its august stiffness and assumes more than Italian softness; and constant yet melodious repetitions and alliterations make the *Gita Govinda* a remarkable and singular work in the Sanscrit language.

And if the book is rich in its music, it is no less rich in its descriptions. The blue waves of the Jumna, the cool shade of the Tamal tree, the soft whisperings of the Malaya breeze, the voluptuous music of Krishna's flute, the timid glances of the love-stricken milk-maids, the fond workings of a lover's heart, the pangs of jealousy, the sorrows of separation, the raptures of re-union,—all these are clearly and vividly described in the song of the immortal bard of Birbhūm.

The poem begins with a description of love-lorn milk-maids disporting themselves around Krishna in the cool shades of Gokul. Radhika sees this; she marks with bitter pang the love of Krishna shared by less worthy rivals; and yet the very sight of Krishna half tempers her sorrow. Nothing can be more beautiful than the description of the joy and delight which the forlorn and abandoned Radha feels, involuntarily and almost in spite of herself, at the very sight of him who is so dear to her heart. An English version conveys no idea of the beauty and softness of the original, yet such as it is, we quote from Sir William Jones's translation :

That god whose cheek is beautified by the nectar of his smiles,
whose pipe drops in his ecstacy, I saw in the groves encircled by
the channels of Yraja who gazed on him askance from the corners
of his eyes. I saw him in the grove with happier damsels, yet the
sight of him delighted me. Soft is the gale which breathes over
you clear pool, and expands clustering blossoms of the volatile
Asoka—soft yet grievous to me in the absence of the foe of Madhu.
Delightful are the flowers of Amra trees on the mountain tops
while the murmuring bees pursue their voluptuous toil,—delightful

yet affecting to me O! friend, in the absence of the youthful Kesava.*

In the sorrow of her heart Radhika retires into her grove and weeps. There the Duti sees her and describes to her afresh the amours of Krishna. Radha's heart bleeds afresh, and the workings of a jealous mind are powerfully described by our author. We will quote one passage in which she concludes a touching and bitter lamentation.

O, gale scented with sandal, who breathest love from the regions of the south, be propitious but for a moment : when thou hast brought my beloved before my eyes thou mayst freely visit away my soul ! Love, with eyes like blue water-lilies, again assails me and triumphs, and while the perfidy of my beloved rends my heart, my female friend is my foe, the cool breeze scorches me like a flame, and the nectar-dropping moon is my poison. Bring disease and death, O ! gale of Malaya ! seize my spirit, O ! god with five arrows ! I ask not mercy from thee : no more will I dwell in the cottage of my father. Receive me into thy azure waves, O ! sister Yamuna, that the ardour of my heart may be allayed. If

হৃৎপত্র বিলাসবশেনমুজু জ্ঞাননিবন্ধনী
 বৃন্দেৎসোহি বৃন্দবীক্ষিত মতি খেদাইগজফলা ।
 মামুদীক্ষা বিলক্ষিত স্থিতস্থা মুক্তাননং কননে
 ঘোষিতঃ রত্নস্বরীৰ্ণবৃক্ষঃ গণ্যানি স্থয়ানি চ ॥
 দুঃখাশোকঃ স্তোত্রকথকনকানোক্তমতিভা
 বিকাশঃ কামারোপেব পথনোহপি বাধবতি ।
 অপি জ্ঞানভূমৌ বসি চ রমণীয়েন মুকু
 জমতিশূতনোঃ অপি শিখণ্ডীয়াঃ স্থপতি ॥

Gita Govinda, and Sarga.

Our quotations are made from Haridas Hraschad's edition of the *Gita Govinda*. The above translation must have been from some other edition as slight differences are observable.

† যনোভুবানন্দ চন্দনানি
 প্রসাদি রে দক্ষিণ মুকু বাসভাঃ ।
 ক্ষণঃ স্নেহপ্রাণ বিদায় সাগরঃ
 পুরো বহু প্রাণ হরো অধিষ্ঠানি ॥

But the hour of retribution comes at last. The Duti goes back of Krishna, and describes to him the wretched state to which he has brought his beloved. Krishna is seized with compunction, seeks out Radhika, and tries to pacify her wrath by a touching entreaty and appeal. The appeal is too lengthy for quotation, we quote a portion of it.

Speak but one mild word, and the rays of thy sparkling teeth will dispel the gloom of my frown. My trembling lips like thirsty *chintamani* long to drink the moon-beams of thy cheek. O! my darling, who art naturally so tender-hearted, abandon thy causeless indignation. At this moment the flame of desire consumes my heart, O! grant me a draught of honey from the lotus of thy mouth. Or if thou beest inexorable, grant me death from the arrows of thy keen eyes; make thy arms my chains, and punish me according to thy pleasure. Thou art my life, thou art my ornament, thou art a pearl in the ocean of my mortal birth; O! be favourable now, and my heart shall eternally be grateful. Thine eyes, which nature formed like blue water-lilies, are become through thy resentment like petals of the crimson lotus; O! tinge with their effulgence these my dark limbs that they may glow like the shafts of love tipped with flowers. Place on my head that foot like a fresh leaf, and shade me from the sun of thy passion whose beams I am unable to bear. Spread a string of gems on those two soft globes; let the golden bells of thy zone tinkle and proclaim the mild edict of love! Say, O! damsel, with delicate speech, shall I dye red with the juice of *alakhanda* those beautiful feet which will make the full-blown lotus blush with shame? "

রিশুরিষ সখীসংবাসোহয়ঃ শিবীৰ হিরণ্যনিলে।

বিসবিস স্বধারম্মি দুঃঃ দুঃখোক্তি মনোবতে ।

পদধৰমণ্ডে তপ্তিহ্নেৰং পুনবৰ্জ্যতে বলাৎ

কুংবলয়বুধ্যঃ বামঃ কাষো নিকাষ নিরজুশঃ ।

বাক্যঃ বিবেহি মনয়ানিল লকনাম

প্রাশাস্য পুৰাণ ন পুংঃ পুনরাবৰ্জ্যহো ।

কিং তে কৃতান্ত তপ্তিহ্নি কমচ্য তরৈশ্চ

তপাদি সিদ্ধ মম বাযাতু দেহদাহঃ ।

Gita Govinda, 7th Sarg.

২৬দসি যদি কিতিদসি দন্তকটিকৌমুদী

হরতি দহতি নিরহতি ভয়ানিঃ ।

not. If she had proper cause of offence, the offender has done proper penance, and all resentment is at an end. Krishna retires to his grove, and Radhika follows him, and is thus welcomed with an outburst of passionate welcome.

Enter, sweet Radha, the bower of Hari ; seek delight, O ! thou whose bosom laughs with the forebode of happiness.

Enter, sweet Radha, the bower graced with a bed of Asoka leaves ; seek delight, O ! thou whose garland leaps with joy on thy breast.

Enter, sweet Radha, the bower illumined with sweet blossoms ; seek delight, O ! thou whose limbs far excel them in softness.

Enter, O ! Radha, the bower made cool and fragrant by gales from the woods of Malaya ; seek delight, O ! thou whose amorous lays are softer than breezes.

Enter, O ! Radha, the bower spread with leaves of twining creepers ; seek delight, O ! thou whose arms have been so long inflexible.

Enter, O ! Radha, the bower which resonates with the murmur of honey-making bees ; seek delight, O ! thou whose embrace yields more exquisite sweetness.

Enter, O ! Radha, the bower attuned by the melodious hand of Kokilas ; seek delight, O ! thou whose lips, which outshine the grains of the pomegranate, are embellished when thou speakest by the brightness of thy teeth: *

- * ১। মজ্জতরুস্তম্ভকেন্দ্রবিন্দনে
প্রবিণ রাধে মাধবমণীপমিহ বিলস ।
রতিরক্তনহ্নিতগবনে ॥
- ২। নব ভবকপোকাগলশয়নমারে
প্রবিণ রাধে মাধবমণীপমিহ বিলস ।
কুচকলনতরলহারায়ে ॥
- ৩। কুঞ্জমন্ডপরিচিতমৃতিবাণপেংহে
প্রবিণ রাধে মাধবমণীপমিহ বিলস ।
কুঞ্জমজ্জুমাধবপেংহে ॥
- ৪। মুজ্জলনলমণকনকপ্রতিশীতে
প্রবিণ রাধে মাধবমণীপমিহ বিলস ।
রসবলিতকমিতনীতে ॥

Here we must pause. The pleasures of a re-union between two such amiable and enthusiastic lovers may be better conceived than described even by the inimitable Jayadeva. Enough has been said to indicate the character and merits of Jayadeva's poetry. He is the only poet in Bengal who has attained eminence by writing in a dead language, who has wrung such soft melody out of an artificial classical language, who has embalmed and perpetuated the amours of Radha and Krishna in songs which remain as the sole specimen of lyrical composition in Sanskrit literature.

We may here mention some scholars have discovered in the *Gita Govinda* a concealed allegory. The joys of Krishna in company with the milkmaids of Brindaban represent earthly pleasures which seduce our heart and lull our senses for a time. The love of Radha is true eternal felicity, to which the mind of the repentant sinner at last turns from the sensual and fleeting pleasures of this world. This may be the conception of the poet; and the following passage which we quote

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- ৩। বিততবহবরীনবগজবনে
অবিশ রাগে মাধবদীপমিহ নিভস।
চিরমিনিসপীনসবনে ॥
- ৬। মধুসুদিতমধুপকুলকলিতরনে
অবিশ রাগে মাধবদীপমিহ নিভস।
মদনরসসরসভানে ॥
- ৭। অধ্বজধরপিকনিকরবিনমধুপরে
অবিশ রাগে মাধবদীপমিহ নিভস।
দশমকীর্তিকিরণিধুরে ॥

Gita Govinda, 14th Sarga.

from Sir Edwin Arnold's exquisite translation of *Gita Govinda* will shew that the five milkmaids, described by Jayadeva, in reality personify the five senses,—smell, sight, touch, taste, and hearing :

One with star-blossomed champac wreathed, wooed him to rest his head,
On the dark pillow of her breast so tenderly outspread ;
And o'er his brow with roses blown she fans a fragrance rare,
That falls on the enchanted sense like rain in thirsty air ;
While the company of damsels wave many an odorous spray,
And Krishna laughing, saying, nighs the soft spring away.

Another gazing in his face, sits wistfully apart,
Searching it with those looks of love that leap from heart to heart ;
Her eyes—afire with shy desire, veiled by their lashes black—
Speak on that Krishna cannot choose but send the message back ;
In the company of damsels whose bright eyes in the ring
Shine round him with soft meanings in the merry light of spring.

The third one of that dazzling band of dwellers in the wood—
Ruddy and becom painting with the pale of youthful blood—
Leans over him, as to his ear a lightsome thing to speak,
And then with tear-soft lip imprints a kiss below his cheek ;
A kiss that thrills, and Krishna turns at the silken touch
To give it back,—Ah Radha! forgetting the too much.

And one with arch smile beckons him away from Jumea's banks,
Where the tall bamboos hoist like spears in battle ranks,
And plucks his cloth to make him come into the mango shade,
Where the fruit is ripe and golden, and the milk and cakes are laid ;
Oh! golden red the mangoes, and glad the feasts of Spring,
And fair the flowers to lie upon and sweet the daisies sing.

Sweetest of all that Temptress who dances for him now
With subtle feet which part and meet in the Rose measure slow,
To the chime of silver bangles, and the beat of rose-leaf hands,
And pipe and lute and cymbal played by the woodland bands ;
So that wholly passion-laden—eye, ear, sense, soul o'ercome—
Krishna is theirs in the forest ; his heart forgets its home.

It is likely, the whole poem, like Spenser's *Fairy Queen*, is meant to be an allegory ; but the allegory is so overlaid with rich, vivid, and melodious descriptions, that the reader misses the allegory, does not care for the allegory, and pours on the descriptions. The fame of Jayadeva rests not on the philosophic or moral signification of the *Gita Govinda*, but on the splendid imagery, the tender feeling, and the melodious descriptions with which the work is replete.

In his own words, "whatever is delightful in the modes of music, whatever is exquisite in the sweet art of love, let the happy and wise learn from the song of Jayadeva."*



অধ্বনককণিকা শ্রুতৌশলনমুখানং চণ্ডৈকভবং,
যচ্চুপ্রারবিবুদ্ধকভবরচনাকাবোপু সৌম্যধিতা।
কংসকঃ সুরসেনপতিতকবে: কৃষ্ণকভানং মনঃ,
সোননঃ পল্লিগাধরজ্ঞ সুধিরঃ শ্রীগীতমোহিনিতঃ ॥

Gita Govinda, 12th Sarga.

CHAPTER III.

EARLY BENGALI LYRIC POETRY.—CHANDIDAS.

Fourteenth Century.

THE student who peruses with pleasure the polished works of Bankim Chandra or Madhusudan will scarcely suppose that the stream of Bengali literature, which has only in recent days attained such purity and expanse, began to flow as early as the fourteenth century of the Christian era. And he will scarcely think that Chaucer of England and Chandidas of Bengal were well nigh contemporaneous writers ; that five hundred years have rolled away since Chandidas first wrote and sang ; or, calculating twenty-five years to a generation, that twenty generations have chanted the lays and ditties of this Father of Bengali Lyric Poetry.

Chandidas is the earliest vernacular poet of Bengal, but it is not possible to speak of him without saying something of Bidyapati, the earliest poet of Behar. Tradition has handed down the names of these two poets together ; they lived and wrote about the same time ; and their poetry has the same theme, the loves of Radha and Krishna. Jayadeva popularized this theme in his inimitable Sanscrit work *Gita Govinda*, composed in the twelfth century ; Bidyapati took up the subject and composed his songs in the vernacular of Behar in the fourteenth century ; and it is probable that Chandidas was only

animatator of Bidyapati, and drew his inspiration from his contemporary of Behar. Thus the earliest Bengali poetry that is extant is indebted by the earliest poetry of Behar.

Bidyapati flourished in Behar in the fourteenth century. The descendants of the poet still possess the village of Bapsi in Tirhut by virtue of a deed of gift from Siva Sinha to the poet, dated 293 of the era of Lakshman Sen, *i. e.*, 1400 A. D. In this document Bidyapati has been described as a *Sakshi* or a poet of merit, so that he must have made his mark before 1400. A still more important document is the *Panjī* or annals of Tirhut. It is an authentic history of that District, and began to be written in 1248 Saka, *i. e.*, 1325 A. D. The *Panjī* gives an account of Bidyapati who is described as the son of Ganapati, and a courtier of king Siva Sinha. Siva Sinha ascended the throne in 1369 Saka, *i. e.*, 1446 A. D., and must therefore have given away Bapsi to the poet during the life time of his father who reigned no less than 61 years. We further learn from the *Panjī* that Siva Sinha had three wives, Padmabati, Lakhima Devi and Biswa Devi, who after the death of their husband successively reigned for 18 months, 9 years and 12 years. Siva Sinha and Lakhima Devi find frequent mention in the songs of Bidyapati, and there can be no doubt that the poet lived about the close of the fourteenth century, and adorned the court of Siva Sinha and his father by whom his talents were recognized and richly rewarded.

The fame of Bidyapati as a poet had spread through-

out Bengal at the time of Chaitanya, and Chaitanya in his early youth was edified with the poetry of Bidyapati and Chandidas.

Glory to Jayadeva, the king and ornament of poets, and to Bidyapati the source of sweetness ; glory to Chandidas, for sweetness unequalled in the world, whose sweet and pure strains in prose and verse my Master Gaur Chandra (Chaitanya) relished with Sharup Rai.*

Again,

The Great Master (Chaitanya) with Ramananda Sen sings and hears day and night the songs of Chandidas and Bidyapati, and the sweet Gita Govinda.†

We have said before that Lakhima Devi the queen of Siva Sinha is often spoken of in Bidyapati's poems. Tradition has it that the intimacy between the princess and the poet was closer than was altogether justifiable, and that Bidyapati's death was caused by this illicit love. We have no hesitation in rejecting these stories altogether as the invention of later days.

We now return to Chandidas the subject of the present chapter. Chandidas was a native of the village of Nannur, in the District of Birbhum, about 24 miles to

* জয় জয়দেব কবি নৃপতি শিবোদয়ি বিদ্যাশক্তি রসধাম ।

কর কর চণ্ডীদাস রস শেখর অখিল ভুবনে অমূল্যম ।

চকর বচনিত মধুর রস নিরবল থমা পদ্যায় পীত ।

অকু বোর গোবিন্দ আপাংলি বাহ বরণ মহিত ।

Pada Kāṣṭhātār.

† চণ্ডীদাস বিদ্যাশক্তি, রাবের নাটক গীত,

কর্ণানুত জীৱিত গোবিন্দ ।

অরণ্য রামানন্দ মনে, মহা প্রভু বাত্রিসিনে,

গনে শুনে পথম অনেক ।

Charitāmrita.

the east of Suri, and was a Brahman by caste. That he was contemporaneous with Bidyapati is sufficiently proved by several poems which have come to us, of which the following is the most noted :

Chandidas heard of Bidyapati's merits, and became anxious to see him. Bidyapati heard of Chandidas's merits, and became anxious to see him. Both became curious. Bidyapati went off with Rup Namin alone for his companion. Chandidas too could not stay, but went off to see Bidyapati. In the way both sang each other's praises, and their hearts remained anxious for each other. Suddenly they met each other, but neither recognized the other. They knew each other when they heard their names.*

The traditions current about the life of Chandidas give us some clue to the nature of the rivalry which has ever existed in Bengal between the Vaishnava and Sakta creeds. Chandidas, as his name implies, was by birth a Sakta, *i. e.*, a worshipper of Chandi, Durga or Sakti, as the goddess is variously called.

It is said that in his early youth, Chandidas worshipped an image of Sakti which was called Bishalakshmi, and the poet often addresses the goddess in his works. As may well be imagined, the conversion of Chandidas to Vaishnavism has given rise to many tales. It is said that,

* চন্দ্রদাস শুনি, বিদ্যাপতি গুণ, মরশনে ভেল অমুরাগ।

বিদ্যাপতি শুনি, চন্দ্রদাস গুণ, মরশনে ভেল অমুরাগ ॥

দুহুঁ উৎকণ্ঠিত হৈল ।

সকলি রূপনারায়ণ কেবল বিদ্যাপতি চলি গেল ॥

চন্দ্রদাস কবু, রহই না পারই, চলল মরশন লাগি ।

পথ হি দুহুঁ জন্ম, দুহুঁ রূপ পাওত, দুহুঁ হিয়ে দুহু রত্ন জাগি ॥

বৈদ্য হি দুহুঁ হোই মরশন পাওল, লখই ন পারই কোই ।

দুহুঁ বোহা নাম শ্রবণে কহি জানল, রূপনারায়ণ মোহি ।

on a certain day, he saw a beautiful flower floating on the river where he had gone to bathe. He took it up and went to worship Bishalakshmi. The goddess appeared in person, and asked for the flower that she might place it on her head. The worshipper was awe-struck, and enquired what strange virtue the flower could possess, so as to induce the goddess to appear in person, and to wish to keep it on her head, instead of allowing the poet to place it at her feet. The goddess replied, "Foolish child, my Master has been worshipped with that flower, it is not fit for my feet, let me hold it on my head." "And who may *thy* Master be?" enquired the poet. *Krishna*, was the reply; and from that day the poet exchanged the worship of the goddess for that of Krishna.

It is scarcely necessary to add, that later Vaishnava writers have taken advantage of Chandidas's conversion to prove the superiority of their deity, and have invented this fable. One thing however is plain, namely, that the rivalry between the two creeds has prevailed in Bengal, as elsewhere in India, from remote times.

Chandidas has immortalized the washerwoman Rami in his poems, and numerous are the stories told about their loves. The poet was informed that he could not perform *Sadhana* till he had a fair companion, not by marriage, not for money, but one to whom his heart would be spontaneously drawn at the first sight. Our poet went out in search of such a person, and it was not long before he found one. A washerwoman was washing clothes on the river side, the poet saw her and was

fascinated. Day after day he would go to the river side with a fishing rod as a pretext, and sat there, gazing on the woman. Words followed and love ensued, and the poet left his home and parents, and ever afterwards lived with Rami, a washerwoman as she was by caste.

Chandidas was a renowned singer. One day, it is said, he went to a neighbouring village Matipur to sing with his paramour ; and when they were returning, the house in which they had taken shelter fell down, and they were both crushed and died in each other's arms. The story has perhaps little foundation in fact. We now turn to the works of these poets.

The poetry of Chandidas presents a striking contrast to that of Bidyapati. Both are poets of a high order, both sang of the amours of Krishna and Radha, both are noted for the beauty of their songs, but here the parallel ends. Bidyapati excels in the richness of his imagery, the wide range of his ideas, the skill and art displayed in his varied similes. Chandidas has but his native, simple, excessive sweetness in place of all these qualities. Bidyapati ransacks the unbounded stores of Nature and of Art to embellish his poetry ; Chandidas looks within, and records the fond workings of a feeling, loving heart in simple strains. In Chandidas's poetry there is a wealth of feeling and pathos ; Bidyapati combines this with a quick fancy, a varied imagery, a leaning for grace and ornament. The faults of the two poets are also characteristic. Chandidas is cloying, and sometimes monotonous, Bidyapati is often artificial

in his images and ideas. At the same time both display a knowledge of the workings of a lover's heart, and pourtray them feelingly and minutely,—the first troubled impressions of love, the resistless force of its influence, the bitter pangs of separation and jealousy, the workings of hope, the effects of despair.

We will try to illustrate our remarks with a few extracts. There is no English version of either Bidyapati or Chandidas, and we have therefore for our English readers ventured to render into English verse the extracts made from the poets. We need scarcely remark that our version will very often fail to convey the deep feeling which characterizes the original.

We make an extract at random from Bidyapati.* It describes the first impressions of love in the heart of Krishna on seeing Radha.

Soon did the lovely vision part
 'Tis gone ! I wake with sudden start !
 A cloud-wrapped lightning sent its dart
 Upon this troubled love-sick heart.
 Scarce half removed was her veil,
 Upon her lips played half a smile,
 And half a glance her sweet eyes shed,
 And half her bosom was displayed,

* মঙ্গলি বলে করি পোষন না তেল ।

মেঘমালা নঃপ তড়িত লতা জলু লবণে শেল সেই খেল ।
 আধ আঁচল খসি, আধ বরষে হাসি, আধই নরন তরহু ।
 আধ উরজ হেরি, আধ আঁচল তরি, তব ঘরি মগধে জনহু ।
 একে জলু গোরা, অন্য কটোরা, অতলু কাঁচল উপাম ।
 করি হরি কহ বন, অলু বৃদ্ধি ঐছন, ঐস পসারল কাঁচ ।
 দশন জুড়া পাতি, অধর মিলায়ক, মুক্ত মুহু কহ অহি ভাব ।
 বিদ্যাপতি কহ, অতরে নে দুঃখ রহ, হেরি হেরি না পুরলো আশা ।

The rest her *musical* did conceal, —
 I gazed and felt my senses reel !
 Her beauty, bright as burnished gold,
 Love's unobtrusive robe did sweet unfold,
 And long love's soft and silken chain,
 Upon the hearts of prostrate men !
 Her pearly teeth were sweetly placed
 On ruby lips with beauty graced,
 And soft she spoke, — I gazed in vain,
 Insatiate gazed on her again !

Our readers must be struck with the *art* of the poet, with the similes and figures with which the small poem is so beautifully embellished, we had almost said, so thickly crowded. In this Bidyapati is in his own element. Not so Chandidas. He has neither the power nor the inclination to rove. He feels deeply, and sings feelingly. We quote from his poems a converse passage, a passage in which Radha is suddenly struck and entranced at hearing the very name of Krishna.^o We translate it thus.

Friend ! who hath named that name ?
 Through me it steals,
 My heart it thrills,
 My soul it doth inflame !
 Ah who shall tell
 What sweet doth dwell
 In that beloved strain !
 I name that name,
 My soul's all flame !
 Oh ! will he come again ?

^o মই কেবা শুনাইলে স্বামী নাম,
 কেনেয় ভিতর দিয়া মনমে শশিমা গো
 আকুল করিয়া মোর লাবণ ।
 না জানি কতক সমু জ্বাৰ নামে আছে গো
 নদনে জ্বাড়িতে নাই পারে ।
 জপিতে জপিতে নাম অখলা করিল গো
 কেমনে পাইব নই তরে ॥

We extract a somewhat longer piece* from Chandi-das. It is a loving appeal from Radha to Krishna, and a more touching appeal it would be difficult to find any-where.

Love ! how shall I my feelings tell ?
 Be mine, in death and life,
 In after-lives, in future births,
 To be thy datus wife.
 Yes ! to thy feet my heart be tied
 By silken ties of love,
 I offer all, my heart and soul,
 I'll be your doting slave !
 I've thought if in this wide wide world
 Another friend I own,
 In loving voice to name my name.
 Alas ! alas ! there's none !
 In earth, in heaven, in after-world,
 Alas ! who loveth me ?
 O ! to thy feet I turn for help.
 To thee alone ! to thee !
 Then do not spurn me, I am weak,
 O ! do not turn away
 I've thought and felt, without thy help,
 I have no other way.
 If for a moment thee I miss,
 A death-like trance I own ;
 I'll keep and nurse thee on my heart
 Even as a precious stone !

* বধু কি আর বলিব আমি ।

মরণে জীবনে, জননে জননে, প্রাণনাথ হইও জুনি ॥
 জেয়ার চরণে, আমার পরাগে, বাধিল জেনের ধাঁসি ।
 সব সমপিয়া, এক সব হইয়া, বিস্তর হইলাম দাসি ॥
 ভাবিয়া দেখিলাম, এ তিন জুগনে, আর কেহ মোর আছে ।
 বাধা বলি কেহ, হুবাঁহিতে নাই, দাঁড়াব জাহার কাছে ॥
 একুলে শুকুলে, গকুলে হুকুলে, আপন্য বলিব কয়ে ।
 গীতল বলিয়া, মরণ হইলাম, শু ছুই করল পায়া ॥
 না তৈল না তৈল ছলে, অবলা অথলে, যে হয় উচিত তোম ।
 ভাবিয়া দেখিলাম, প্রাণনাথ বিনে, গতি যে নাহিকু মোর ॥
 আঁখির নিমিষে, বধি নাছি দেখি, তবে সে পরাগে হরি ।
 চণ্ডিদাসে কর, পরেশ রতন, পলায় গাঁধিয়া গরি ॥

The same intense feeling,—the same absence of all figures of speech, marks this poem. We shall pass on to another extract,* describing the despair of Radha in the absence of her beloved.

A cruel throb is in my heart !
I'll leave my home,
And thither roam,
Where never's known love's fatal art.

Friend ! who shall say that love is sweet ?
I loved and smiled,
My heart's beguiled,
And life-long sorrow is my fate !

For love should e'er a damsel sigh,
O ! spare her shame,
In fire and flame,
A kinder death, O let her die !

For I have felt this bitter grief,
My eye-balls shine
With ceaseless brine,
Says Chandidas, O for her life !

Seldom doth Bidyapati manifest such deep feeling and pathos. His strong point lies, as we have already said, in his imagery and embellishments. But nevertheless the poet of Behar too can equal the poet of Bengal in his own element when he chooses to divest himself of his art, and sings as only a true poet can

* কি দায়িত্ব বুকের বাণী ।

সে দেশে যাইব, যে দেশে না জনি, পাশ পিরীতের কথা ॥

মই কে বলে পিরীতি ভাল ।

হাসিতে হাসিতে পিরীতি করিগে, কান্দিতে জনম বেল ॥

কলপ ভীষ্ম, কল্ল কীড়াইয়া, যে খনী পিরীতি করে ।

ভুকের জনল ঘেন য়াড়াইয়া, এমনকি পুড়িয়া মরে ॥

হাস বিমোহিনী, এ দুঃখে দুঃখিনী, জেমন ছল ছল জাণি ।

চক্কোমনি করে, নে রতি হইয়া, পরাণ সংশয় বেধি ।

sing; and the celebrated lines quoted below* are an instance to the point.

I 've gazed and gazed on beauty's glow,
 E'er since my life began,
 Insatiate still my eye-balls swim,
 Fain would I gaze again !
 I 've heard his honey-dropping words,
 E'er since my life began,
 Insatiate still my ear remains,
 Fain would I hear again !
 What happy nights with him I passed,
 Unhappy yet I feel,
 What years my heart I coasted on his,
 Insatiate hearts it still.

Over a hundred years elapsed between the time of Chandidas and that of Chaitanya. Within these hundred years a host of poets of lesser note flourished. A large number of poems composed within this period are ascribed to Govinda Das. It is easy to perceive therefore that more than one poet of that name flourished. Indeed *Govinda Das* means servant of Krishna, and it is not unlikely that most of the poets who wrote about the loves of that deity assumed that coveted name. Balaram Das, Jnan Das, and many other poets of lesser note, flourished during that period.

Their poetry or rather song has the same characteristic qualities. They are always sweet, and often display a vivid fancy and considerable depth of feeling, and they all relate to the amours of Radha and Krishna.

* জনন অধি হার, রূপ বিহারগু, নয়ন না তিরখিত তেল ।
 সেই মধুর কোল, জগদহি গুনলু, প্রতিপথে পরশন গেল ॥
 কত মধুমিনী, রক্তনে খেঁঁয়াইলু, না বুঝিলু কৈতন কেন।
 কার লাগে তুল, হিয়ে হিয়ে রাখলু, তবু হিয়া জুড়ন না গেল ॥

We have examined the merits of the best poets of the class, and we think it unnecessary to go over the entire field. There is a tolerably good collection of their works in the *Pada Kalpataru*, and it is by no means a waste of time to go over these old authors, even from a literary point of view. The admirer of modern Bengali literature will be surprised at the sweetness and beauty that pervade these old compositions. That they have been preserved so long and so carefully is owing to the Vaishnavas, and to them, therefore, Bengal owes an immense debt of gratitude.



CHAPTER IV.

KASIRAM DAS AND HIS MAHABHARATA.

Fifteenth century.

In the last Chapter we have spoken of the lyric poetry of the fourteenth century. It was probably in the fifteenth century that Kasiram Das undertook and performed the mighty task of translating the Sanscrit epic *Mahabharata* into Bengali verse. Kasiram's work is the first great and national literary work in the Bengali language, it is a foundation of rock on which the national literature of Bengal has been subsequently built up. Chandidas is the *Father of Bengali song*; Kasiram Das is the *Father of Bengali literature*; properly so called.

Unfortunately we know little of the life of this great poet. He was born in Singi, near Katwa in the District of Burdwan; and the supposed site of his house is still pointed out as *Keser Bhita*. He was a Kayastha by caste, and his bold endeavour to popularise the great epic of ancient India among his countrymen in simple Bengali verse was regarded with suspicion and distrust. A Brahman poet Krittibas followed his example, and translated the other great epic Ramayana into Bengali verse, and his laudable work too was viewed with jealousy and displeasure. And a popular verse is often repeated :—

কান্দীবেদে, কুন্তীবেদে, আগ বায়ুবেদে,
এই তিন মন্ত্রীবেদে ।

"Kasidas and Krittilas, and those who constantly seek to associate with Brahmins;—these are dangerous men."

Such narrow jealousy however does not turn the tide of knowledge, and the great poet of the fifteenth century first led his countrymen into that store-house of Sanscrit poetry and learning which we have learnt to appreciate more and more with the lapse of centuries and the increase of knowledge.

The main story of the *Mahabharata* is well known. It describes the contest between the Pandavas and the Kuru princes for the throne of Kuruland. The Pandavas were banished at first, but they made powerful friends and demanded their share, and the western portion of Kuruland, with Indraprastha for its capital, was ceded to them. They staked and lost this kingdom however at dice, and retired into the wilderness, according to their plighted word. On the expiry of the prescribed period they came forward again and demanded a share of the kingdom. The Kuru princes refused this,—and the consequence was a disastrous battle in which all the great princes of Northern India took part, and in which the Kuru tribe was well nigh exterminated. The Pandavas won, and established their rule in the Kuru kingdom.

Connected with the main story, the manners and customs of the times, the pomp and splendour of courts, the rules of war and peace, the power and jealousies of kings, and the heroism and chivalry of the Kshatriya warriors of ancient India have been described with graphic force, and unsurpassed power.

On the other hand, the inner workings of the human mind and all its varied feelings, love, hatred, jealousy between rival princes, revenge that knew no satiety, the patience of a suffering saint, the greatness of a true hero ;—all the various shades of human character, from the sublime virtues of Bhishma who drew forth tears of admiration from the enemies who killed him, to the fiery jealousies of Duryodhana who engaged the whole of northern India in a disastrous war rather than cede five villages to his much-hated cousins ;—all that a true poet and a great poet is capable of, has been worked out with pencil of a Homer. Homer's characters are not more life-like than the men of flesh and blood, of determination and valour, who figure in the great Sanscrit epic ; and Homer's incidents are not more sublime in conception or graphic in description than those of the Mahabharata. The world has seen no nobler creation of the imagination than the great epic of the Hindus.

But while the epic of Homer was collected and preserved by Pisistratus the ruler of Athens, as early as the sixth century before Christ, no Hindu ruler of antiquity took the trouble of preserving the great Hindu epic from subsequent additions and interpolations. Generations of poets have accordingly added to the old epic until it has almost changed its character, and the crystal stream of true epic poetry is lost in a wide morass of mythical episodes and mythological stories, of cosmogony and theogony, of never ending didactic and dogmatic instructions. All this episodical

matter fills three-fourths of the epic in its present shape; the leading narrative barely takes up a fourth part.

When the evil had been done, an attempt was made to prevent further expansion of the work. The contents of the epic were described in a sort of preface, and the number of *shlokas* or couplets in each Book was given, so as to prevent further addition. The curious reader will find these numbers in the note given below,* as well as the number of couplets actually found in the published edition of the work.

The total number of couplets enumerated in the preface comes to near eighty-five thousand. But the limit so fixed has been exceeded in still later ages, further additions have been made, and the Sanscrit *Mahabharata* now published contains over ninety thousand

<i>Books.</i>	<i>Sections.</i>	<i>Number of couplets according to preface.</i>	<i>Number of couplets in the Atlantic Society's Edition.</i>
* Adi	227	8584	8479
Salha	78	2511	2709
Vana	269	11664	17478
Virata	67	2050	2376
Udyoga	186	6668	7656
Bhisma	117	5884	5656
Drona	170	8909	9680
Karna	69	4964	5046
Salya	59	3320	3671
Sauntika	18	870	811
Stri	27	775	827
Santi	139	14734	15943
Anusasana	146	8000	7796
Asvamedha	103	3120	2900
Ashvamedha	42	1506	1105
Mausala	8	320	292
Mahaparatana	3	320	109
Sarga	5	209	312
	1,933	84,836	90,816

couplets, excluding the *Harivansa*. It is an encyclopedic work; all the tales and traditions and mythological stories of India have been comprehended in this one work. As a store-house of Hindu traditions, it has thus been rendered unique and invaluable; as an epic poem it has been ruined.

Endeavours have been made from time to time to disentangle the leading narrative from episodic matter, and to publish it separately. But as yet, such endeavours have not met with success.*

In undertaking to translate this vast work into Bengali verse for Bengali readers, Kasiram Das very wisely decided to condense the matter in the translation. The Bengali version is a little over one-third of the original Sanscrit poem in extent, consisting of about thirty-six thousand couplets. The work of condensing the original epic has been performed with thoughtful care; and while mere verbal descriptions have been greatly abridged, the stories and incidents have been repeated in the Bengali version with scarcely any important omission.

One instance, selected at random, will convey to our readers the process adopted by the translator. The famous story of Sakuntala has been told in the original *Mahabharata* in six sections of the First Book, viz.

* The edition of the great epic published by the Asiatic Society of Bengal is well known to all scholars. A meritorious translation in Bengali prose by the late munificent Kali Dasanna Sinha is the version now in general use in Bengal. An English translation of the work was undertaken and nearly completed by the late Pratap Chandra Rai. His widow has piously undertaken to complete this work.

sections LXIX to LXXIV. Section LXIX, giving an account of Dushyanta's hunt in thirty-one couplets, has been reduced to eight couplets by Kasiram. Section LXX, describing king Dushyanta's entry into Kauva's forest in fifty couplets, has been reduced to ten couplets in Bengali. Section LXXI, narrating Dushyanta's meeting and conversation with Sakuntala, has been reduced from forty-two couplets in the original to twenty-five in the translation. Section LXXII concludes Sakuntala's story of her birth in nineteen couplets in Sanskrit, and has been rendered in nineteen couplets by Kasiram. Section LXXIII speaks of Dushyanta's marriage with Sakuntala in thirty-three couplets, which have been rendered in twenty-four in Bengali. And section LXXIV narrates the subsequent story of Sakuntala and of the birth of Bharata in one hundred thirty-eight couplets, which have been translated in eighty-six in the Bengali version. We reproduce below the whole of section LXXII with Kasiram's version, and the reader will find that Kasiram can be a faithful translator when he is not called upon to condense the matter.* Occasionally, however,

* অদ্বিপর্ক ৭২ অধ্যায় ।

কণ্ঠ উবাচ ।

এবমুক্তস্তথা নহ্যঃ সন্ধিদেশে সমাগতিম্ ।
 আতিষ্ঠত তদা কালে মেনকা বাণুনা পহ ॥
 অখ্যাপ্যাহং বধ্যারোহা তপসা দধ্যতিমিযম্ ।
 বিধাখিত্রং তপ্যমানঃ মেনকা ভীকরাশয়ে ।
 অস্তিহান্য ততঃ স্য তং প্রাতীকুং বদিসমিতৌ ।
 অপোবাহ চ বাসোহগ্ন্যা মকিঃ শনিসমিতম্ ।

a wide divergence is noticeable between the original and the translation, and in some places an additional section or story is found in the translation which does not

মাগল্হুং বরিতা ভূমিং বান্ধুসক্তিগতী ।
 অমর্যাদেব মতীকঃ মাক্তং পরবর্ণিতী ।
 পশ্যাত্ততঃ তদ্বৈবৈশ্যং বান্ধুসক্তিগতী ॥
 বিখ্যাত্ততঃ স্তাং তু বিধমহামনিদিতাম্ ।
 গুহ্যং বাসসি মস্তায়াং যেনকাং মুনিসত্তমঃ ।
 অনির্দেশ্যযোগ্যং অপশ্যাবিবৃত্যং তদা ॥
 তদা তপস্তপান্ দৃষ্ট্বা ন তু নিগদ্যতমঃ ।
 চক্ৰং কানং সংবদ্য তদা কামবশং গতাঃ ॥
 নামস্তবক চাপানাং যা চাপাচ্ছাং অনিন্দিতা ।
 তৌ তম স্থতিং কানং উভৌ বাহুরতাং তদা ॥
 অমর্যাদৌ কথাকামঃ যথৈক বিবদ্য তথা ॥
 জনবানান ন মুনিস্তবকাঃ শক্ন্তমান্ ॥
 এহে হিমবাতো রম্যো মালিনীকান্তো মদীন্ ॥
 স্নাতমুৎসজ্য তং বর্ভঃ মেনকা মালিনীমহু ।
 কৃতকার্যঃ ততস্তুর্গঃ অমল্যং শক্ন্তমানম্ ॥
 তং বনে বিজনে মর্ত্যং সিংহবায় সনাকুলে ।
 দৃষ্ট্বা শরানং শক্ন্তাঃ সহস্রাং পৰ্য্যবায়ম্ ॥
 মেঘাং স্থিতবনে বালাং কব্যানাং মাংসবৃদ্ধিঃ ॥
 পৰ্য্যবক্স্য তং তদা শক্ন্তা মেনকাচ্ছতাম্ ।
 উপস্পৃষ্ট্বা পতন্ত্যহমশ্যং শয়িতামিহাম্ ।
 নির্জনে বিপিনে বধ্যো শক্ন্তাঃ পরিবারিতাম্ ।
 আনয়িতা ততশ্চক্ৰাঃ দুহিতুষে ন্যবেশয়ম্ ।
 শরীরকুং আগবাতা তদ্য চাপানি তুজতে ।
 ক্রমোপতে কবোহপ্যুজাঃ পিতরো বর্ধশাসনে ॥
 নির্জনেকু বনে বধ্যো শক্ন্তাঃ পরিবারিতা ॥
 শক্ন্তনেতি নাশ্যম্যাং কৃতং চাপি ততো মদা ॥
 এবং দুহিতরঃ বিজি নব বিপ্র শক্ন্তমানাম্ ।
 শক্ন্তগা চ পিতরঃ বস্ততে বাবনিদিতা ॥

occur in the original. The excellent story of Srihatsa, for instance; which Krishna narantes to Yudhishtira in

শকুন্তলা উবাচ ।

এতদ্ভাষ্যে পুষ্টিঃ সখ্যমতঃ মহর্গয়ে ।
 তুয়াং কপুলা ধামৈবঃ বিদ্ধি যঃ সন্তুজাখিল ॥
 কপুং হি পিতৃবঃ সন্তো পিতৃবঃ বা অজানতৌ ।
 ইতি তে কথিতঃ স্মারান্ যথা বৃত্তং শ্রুতং যথ ॥

শকুন্তলাই জ্ঞানবধী ।

ইহা আজ্ঞা কৈল নক্সে বাহু দুইজন ।
 দেবরাজ আজ্ঞা পাইয়া চলিল তখন ।
 হেনমতে তবে গেল মুনির খোচর ।
 মুনি দেখি মেনকার কাপিল অস্তর ।
 অতিশয় হুবেশ হইয়া বিম্বাধরী ।
 মুনির নিকটে ক্রীড়া করে বাহো করি ।
 হেনকালে বায়ু বহে আসি ধরতর ।
 উড়াইয়া বস্ত্র তার ফেলিল অস্তর ।
 আস্তে আস্তে মেনকা উঠিয়া বস্ত্র ধরে ।
 নিবিধ একারে লবনেরে মিন্ধা করে ।
 এ নকল কোতুক দেখিল মুনিবর ।
 শরীরেতে ছেলিল কামের পক্ষশর ।
 মেনকা ধরিলো মুনি নিল নিজ দেশ ।
 কামে মত্ত হুতা করে পুষ্কার বিশেষ ॥
 হেনমতে বহু দিন গেল ক্রীড়া মলে ।
 তল জপ সকল ত্যাগিল কামধণে ॥
 এক দিন সূর্য্যাকালে বিম্বাধিত মুনি ।
 সন্ধ্যা হেতু বলে রেখে জল দেহ আশি ॥
 জনিয়া মেনকা হাসি বলিল বচন ।
 এত দিনে ভাল সন্ধ্যা হইল গ্রহণ :

an early part of *Yana Parva* in the Bengali translation, does not occur in the corresponding portion of the original, as published by the Asiatic Society of Bengal.

Such is the method in which Kasiram Das has performed the great task which he imposed upon himself. The mere mechanical work of translating and condensing a great Sanscrit epic into over thirty-six thousand Bengali couplets is a tremendous task. If we suppose that Kasiram composed fifteen couplets every day, and that he worked twenty days in every month, he must have laboured ten years of his life to bring this great work to completion.

And the merits of the translation are not of a mean

এক জনি মুনি হৈল কুপিত অস্তর ।
 দেবিয়া বৈদকা গুণে পলায় মতর ।
 হইয়াছিল সেই গভী মুনির উরসে ।
 অরপে প্রসব করি গেল নিম্ন বেশে ।
 মুনি তপ নষ্ট করে খেল দিভ স্থানে ।
 আমোদে দেবিয়া খেল বিষম কাননে ।
 দিহে ব্যাস পশুগণ হিংসা নাহি করে ।
 পশুগণ বেড়িয়া যে রহিল আশারে ।
 তখনা করিতে খেল কণু সেই বনে ।
 অনাথা দেবিয়া তাঁর দয়া হৈল মনে ।
 গুহে আনি পালন করিল মুনিবধ ।
 তেঁই আমি তাঁর কন্তা জন হস্তগর ।
 শকুনে বেড়িয়াছিল দিকুন্ত কাননে ।
 শকুন্তলা নাম খুবে রাপে তেঁকারে ॥
 মম প্রসবণ্য এক মুনি জিজ্ঞাসিল ।
 কহিলেন কণু তাঁর তাহে জানা খেল ।
 আদিগকে দিয়া শকুন্তলা উপাখ্যান ।
 কানীরাহ দণে কহে শুনে গুণবান ॥

order. The reader must not look for the heroic spirit and the epic grandeur of the original in the Bengali version ; but in simplicity, sweetness and fluency, in a lucid flow of narration and an inexhaustible flow of verse, Kasiram Das remains unsurpassed and unequalled in Bengali literature.

And if success be a proof of true merit, Kasiram's merit is beyond praise. No work in Bengali, scarcely even the *Ramayana* of Krittibas, is more extensively read and more deeply honoured by the people of Bengal, specially of the upper classes. The endless traditions and tales of the past times have a charm and an attraction, the morals inculcated and the incidents narrated never fail to please, and the translator's dignified, but simple and graceful verse never tires. Mothers know no better theme for imparting moral instruction to their daughters, wives know no better work for whiling away an idle hour, and elderly men know no richer store from which to narrate stories to groups of little children night after night. Thus the tales of the *Mahabharata* have been handed down from generation to generation with never failing interest, and where is the Bengali who has not in his boyish days passed many a long winter evening over these moral tales which can never, never be other than interesting and instructive?

CHAPTER V.

KRITIBAS AND HIS RAMAYANA.

Fifteenth Century.

THERE are reasons to believe that Kasiram Das translated the *Mahabharata* in the fifteenth century. Kritibas's date is very uncertain ; but it is probable that he produced his Bengali version of the *Ramayana* probably about the close of the same century.

OF the life of Kritibas we know as little as we know of Kasiram Das, except that he was a Brahman by caste, and was born at Fulia, near Santipur, in the District of Nadiya. The two great pioneers of Bengali poetry lived in the opposite shores of the sacred Bhagirathi.

THE task which Kritibas set before himself was less arduous than what his predecessor Kasiram had performed. The *Ramayana* in the original Sanscrit is not encyclopædic in its character ; its main story about the life and adventures of Rama is not overgrown with mythology, cosmogony and theogony ; its episodes are rare and restricted to the early portion of the work ; and its leading narrative is seldom interrupted. The *Ramayana* in fact is mainly the work of a single poet,*

* It cannot be denied that it has undergone alterations through succeeding centuries, but in spite of them the epic poem continues to be one connected story, mainly the creation of one mind. A learned writer in the Westminster Review writes—"The poem has evidently undergone considerable alteration since the time of its first composition, but still, underneath all the subsequent additions, the original

working out a single connected story ; whereas the *Mahabharata* is a creation of many centuries, and a storehouse of endless stories. The *Ramayana* contains professedly twenty-four thousand couplets or epic versés ; the *Mahabharata* contains professedly eighty-five thousand. The translator of the *Ramayana* had therefore a lighter task to perform than the translator of the *Mahabharata*.

In undertaking this task, Kritibas, like his great predecessor Kasiram Das, wisely determined to condense the original. We do not exactly know the length of

elements are preserved, and careful criticism might perhaps separate the interpolations, and present the more genuine parts as a whole by themselves. The task however, would be difficult, and perhaps as impracticable as it has proved in the Homeric poems. For many ages it is certain that the work existed only by oral tradition, and each rhapsodist added or altered at his pleasure, or to suit the taste or vanity of the princely family whom he served. The measure of the poem, moreover, is of a somewhat fatal facility, and many rhapsodists would naturally be ambitious of mingling their own songs with those of their hands, and the habit of repetition would at once supply them with a vocabulary of epic phrases to suit their purpose. Whole chapters thus betray their origin by their barrenness of thought and laborious mimicry of the epic spirit, which in the case of the old poets had spontaneously burst out of the heart's fulness like the free song of a child. But when the Indian Pindaratus arose who collected these separate songs and reduced them to their present shape, the genuine and spurious were alike included, and no Hindu critic ever appears to have attempted to discriminate between them." *Hindustan Review*, Vol. L.

An edition of the Sanscrit *Ramayana* (Bengal Recension) with an Italian translation was prepared by Corossio, and published at the expense of the late king of Sardinia. A French translation has been given to the world by the indefatigable Hippolyte Fanché, and for a very meritorious metrical translation into English we are indebted to Ralph Griffith. Pandit Hem Chandra Vidyaratna has conferred a lasting obligation on the people of Bengal by publishing an edition of the Sanscrit work (North-west Recension) with an excellent translation in prose ; and the late poet Raj Krishn Rai has given us a faithful and commendable translation of the great work in Bengali verse.

Krittibas's version, for, as we will state hereafter, that version has been considerably altered and added to by mischievous editors in recent times. An edition of the work, printed in 1803 in the Serampore Mission Press, has however been reprinted; and from this edition we find that the twenty-four thousand couplets of the original work have been condensed into about sixteen thousand Bengali couplets.

But Krittibas has gone farther than this. A comparison of his *Ramayana* with the original shows that his version is no translation at all, but merely a new narration of the story of the ancient epic in his own way. There is considerable divergence in the arrangement of the matter; much of the contents in the original has been omitted, and many new incidents and stories have been introduced. And even when we compare the accounts of the same incidents in the two works, we find them so dissimilar that the Bengali work cannot be called a condensed translation of the Sanscrit work.

One instance will illustrate this. The breaking of Janaka's bow by Rama, and the nuptials of Rama and his brothers, and the defeat of Parasurama, have been described in the last eleven sections of the First Book of the Sanscrit *Ramayana*, viz. sections LXVII to LXXVII, comprising 305 couplets. These subjects have been reproduced in Krittibas's work (reprint of edition of 1803) in one long section of 365 couplets, but it is not possible to call this section a translation, in any sense, of the eleven sections of the Sanscrit work. The story has

been differently told in the two works ; and Krittibas narrates the events entirely in his own way, without any reference whatever to the Sanscrit work.*

* We quote the account of Rama's marriage from the two works. The Bengali poet describes a Bengali marriage ceremony of the present day !

বাগকান্ত । ৩৩ সর্গ ।

ভক্তঃ সীতাঃ সমানীবা মল্লীকতরুপকুহিতাম্ ।
 সমকমলৈঃ সংহরণ্য রম্যবাস্তবমুপ ভবা ।
 অত্রাঙ্কনকো রাজা তেজস্বানন্দবর্ধনম্ ।
 ইবা সীতা সমকুতা মনঃপ্রসারী ভব ॥
 প্রতীচ্ছৈনাম্ ভবঃ তে পাণিঃ পুন্ড্রীষ-পাণিনা ।
 পতিব্রতা কহাভাষা হারোবাধুপতা সখা ॥
 ইত্যুক্তা প্রাক্ষিপন্ রাজা মনঃপুতা জন্য তরুণ ।
 সাধু মালিন্তি দেবাদাম্বুদীপং নবভাঃ তরুণ ।
 দেবহস্ততিনির্বোহঃ পুষ্পবর্গী মহানকুণ্ড ॥
 এতঃ দম্বা পুতাঃ সীতাঃ মত্তোদেকপুংস্কৃতান্ ।
 অত্রাঙ্কনকো রাজা তেজস্বাস্তিপরিমিতঃ ॥
 মল্লমাবহু ভবঃ তে উপলীলাসুধাতাঃ মহা ।
 প্রতীচ্ছৈ পাণিপুন্ড্রীষ মাকুণ্ড কালমা পর্যায়ঃ ॥
 তমেবমুক্তাঃ অনকো ভবতরুভাভাবিত ।
 গৃহাণ পাণিঃ মাকুণ্ডাঃ পাণিনাঃ রত্নমলম ॥
 শক্রযক্ষাণি ধর্মীক্সা অত্রবীন্ মিথিলেহতঃ ।
 প্রতকৌর্জে মহাপাঠোঃ । পাণিঃ পুন্ড্রীষ-পাণিনা ॥
 সকৌ ভবভুঃ সৌম্যাক্ষ মল্লীকুচব্রিতরুতাঃ ।
 পত্নীভিঃ নক্ত কাপুংত্রাঃ মাকুণ্ড কালমাঃ পর্যায়ঃ ॥
 জনকমা নক্তঃ প্রহা পানীন্ পাণিত্তিরম্পুশম্ ।
 তদ্ব্যবস্তে চতুর্থাঃ বসিষ্ঠমাঃ মতে হিতাঃ ॥
 অগ্নিঃ প্রদক্ষিণঃ তথা বেদিং রাজানমেতৎ ।
 কথীংচাপি মহাক্ষমাঃ মহাক্ষীমাঃ নবুতলাঃ ।
 মণোজ্ঞেণ তদনন্তং বিবাহঃ বিদিপূজকম্ ॥

The Sixth Book of the epic describes the war between Rama and Kavana, which is the crowning incident of

পুণ্ড্রবীর্ষভাসীকবীরীকঃ স্বভাষরঃ ।
 বিবাহলুপ্তিনিধোঽধর্ষীতবানিঅনিব্রতৈঃ ॥
 নবুত্থানসঃ সজ্যা বহুবীর্ষকঃ তদ্রূপঃ কলম্ ।
 নিবাহে যযুধ্মান্যঃ তদবুত্থানপুণ্ড্র ॥
 নৈবংশ বর্জমানেকু তুযোবুত্থানিমানিভ্র ৷
 নিবাহিঃ তে পরিক্রমা উত্তরীয়া মহৌলসঃ ॥
 অধোপকর্মাৎ কথুক্ষে মহাবীরা যযুনন্দন্যঃ ।
 বাজাপাসুঘবৌ পশ্যন্ মহিনন্দ্যঃ স্বাশ্বতঃ ॥

জানকীর বিবাহ কথা ।

যজায় বস্ত্র দিয়া বলে জনক রাজন ।
 তেঁমার পুত্রে কল্পা দিয়া লইলাম শরণ ॥
 দশরথ রাজা বলে জনক রাজার ।
 শরণ লইলাম দির। চারিটে কোঠরে ॥
 দুই রাজা উঠি তবে কৈল সজাধন ।
 কল্পা আন আমি কল যত বজুগণ ॥
 মান্য বেশ কুসা করেন যত নবীগণে ।
 বেশ করিল লক্ষী মোহিতে নানাগণে ॥
 মাধব কেহ কেহ তের আমলকী ।
 তোল। জলে ডান এবে করে চন্দ্রমুখী ॥
 টিবিবিত্তে কেশের করে জলের মাৰ্জ্জন ।
 অঙ্গে অঙ্গে অভরণ নিতেছে তৎকণ ॥
 কপালে তুলিয়া দিল নির্ধন মিল্লুর ।
 নালকুয়া নসতেজ দেখি যে প্রচুর ॥
 নাকোতে বেশর দিল মুকুতাছিন্নোলে ।
 পাটের পাঙ্কড়া দিল নকল শরীরে ৷
 হকল নহন যেদি কঙ্কণের বেশা ।
 কামের কাষান বেদ গ্রন্থ পলিতেকা ॥

the story; and in describing this war Krishnās has scarcely followed the story of the Sanscrit work. The first forty sections of this Book in the original Sanscrit,

গলায় তুলিয়া দিল হার কিনিবিনি ।
 বুকেতে তুলিয়া দিল সোণায় কাচনি ॥
 উপর হাতেতে তুলি দিল সোণায় তাক ।
 অঙ্গে অস্তরণ দিয়া তুলি অঙ্গার ॥
 দুই বাঁচ শায়ে পরেন অতি বিলক্ষণ ।
 শায়ে উপর বাজে সোণান কঙ্কন ॥
 বস্ত্র যে পরিল সবে সুন্দর প্রভু ।
 দুই পায়ে তুলি দিল বাজন সুপুর ॥
 সুবর্ণ আসনে বসিলেন রূপবতী ।
 চারি দিকে আলি দিল মোহাগের ব্যক্তি ।
 চারি করীতে বেশ করিল বিলক্ষণ ।
 শুভকণে যত্নে গিয়া দিল বরশন ॥
 অঙ্গপেট নাই করের সুপে হান ।
 রাঘবের চরণে গিয়া করিল অর্পণ ॥
 অঞ্জলি পুষ্প দিয়া নমস্কার করে ।
 মস্ত্র প্রদক্ষিণ কৈল রাঘবের পদতলে ॥
 অঙ্গপেট দুড়াইল যত বজ্জ্বল ।
 লক্ষী নারায়ণ হৈল শুভ বরশন ॥
 সীতা লইয়া সবে লৈল যাত্র পানি ।
 লক্ষী নারায়ণ সৌহ হৈয়াছে মেলানি ॥
 প্রলম্বায় দিয়া কন্যা বর লৈল যত ।
 শোয়াইল লৈয়া লক্ষী অঙ্গকার যত ।
 বরকে আনিতে আজ্ঞা করে সবীকৃত ।
 যজ্ঞের পূজা করন রাঘ নারায়ণ ।
 হস্তে ধরি আনাইল রাঘ নারায়ণে ।
 গীতের হাতে ধরি তোল বনে বজ্জ্বল ।
 মনেতে ভাবিলেন ভবন সীতাকুরাণী ।
 পায়ে হাত দেন পাছে রাঘ গুণবর্ণি ॥

comprising about a thousand couplets, have been omitted by Krittibas, and he substitutes a small part of this story in his first five sections. The war commences with the sending of Angada as an envoy to Ravana, which is described in Section XLI of the Sanscrit work, and in Section VI. of Krittibas.

The incidents of the war then follow generally in the same order as in Sanscrit. But Krittibas's account of the battles is his own, and he has introduced some new incidents and new warriors of which there is no mention in the Sanscrit. The account of Mahi-Ravana and Abi-Ravana and the childish episode of Hanuman carrying the solar orb under his arm find no mention in the Sanskrit epic.

It will thus appear that Krittibas's work is not a translation of the Sanscrit work. A class of reciters called

সাব হাতের শস্তু করেন কনকনি ।
 হাতেতে পরিয়া তোলেন বাঁহ বনুনি ।
 স্ত্রীলোকেরা পরিহাস করে সেই ঠায়ে ।
 কেহ বলে হাতে ধরে কেহ বলে পায়ে ॥
 পূর্বাঙ্গের বর কন্যা অছিল দুইজনে ।
 কন্যা দান করে রামো বিবিশ বিধানে ॥
 কন্যা দান করে রাজ্য বিবিশ প্রকারে ।
 পক্ষ হস্তিকণী বিধা পরিচয় করে ॥
 দাস দানী অনেক রাজ্য দিল নৃপধরে ।
 জলধারা বিধা কন্যা বর লইল ধরে ॥
 রাজ্য রাণী বিদ্য ধরে করিল ব্রহ্মন ।
 কন্যা বর দুইজনে করিল ভোগন ॥
 হাসর বর গান্ধাইল যত সঙ্গীপন ।
 রাম সীতা বাসর ঘরে বসিল দুইজন ॥

Kathakas have flourished in this country from olden times ; they recite sacred legends before large audiences ; they amuse and entertain their hearers by their wit, or move them to tears by their eloquence ; and they thus teach the unlettered public in the traditions of the past, and preserve from age to age the literary heritage of the nation. The *Ramayana* is a fit subject for *Kathakas* ; and the recitation lasts for a month or more, the speaker taking up the story every day from the point where he left it on the preceding day. It is supposed with reason that Kritibas learnt the story of the *Ramayana* from *Kathakas*, and that without attempting to translate the Sanscrit epic he has given his version of the story as he heard it. The poet has himself told us in several places in his work that he has composed it *as he heard it recited*.

But if Kritibas fails us as a translator, as a poet and composer he rises in our estimation. His narration is fluent and easy and often sparkles with the richest humour. Kasiram Das is a pious and learned student who has endeavoured to give his countrymen a condensed translation of the Sanscrit *Mahabharata* ; Kritibas is a sprightly story-teller who tells the story of the *Ramayana* with his own native wit. Kasiram Das is anxious to teach his countrymen in the sacred traditions, the undying legends, and the didactic narrations, which compose the bulk of the *Mahabharata*. Kritibas delights in depicting in vivid colours the deeds of Hanuman, the fierce rage of the Rakshasas, the marvellous prowess of the god-like Rama. Kasiram

Das approaches his subject with reverence, and writes in a chaste and dignified though simple style ; Krittibas delights in the somewhat primitive battles between monkeys and giants, colours his description with his wit, and writes in the style of ordinary villagers. Kasiram Das's work is the favourite study of pious Hindu ladies and of religious and elderly men of the upper classes ; Krittibas appeals more effectively to the million. The village *Madi* (confectioner) reads his *Ramayana*, when waiting for his customers, and the village *Kahi* (oil-manufacturer) chants the story of Rama and Sita, as his bullock turns his primitive oil-mill with a slow creaking sound. To the upper ten-thousand, Kasiram Das's work is a repository of all the sacred traditions and moral lessons of the Hindus ; to the class of vendors, shopkeepers and the like, as well as to the upper classes, Krittibas's work is a joy which endureth for ever. For the millions of Bengal, the two works have been a means of moral education the value of which cannot be over-estimated.

The simplicity of Krittibas's style and the great circulation of his work among the lower as well as upper classes has led to the frequent tampering of his text by successive editors, until the editions now sold in the Bazaars have ceased to be Krittibas's work. We have made our extracts from a reprint of the edition of 1803, as it is less corrupt than more recent editions ; but even that edition is not absolutely correct. Pandit Ramgati Nyayaratna has given us a passage from a manuscript of Krittibas's work written in 1099 of the Bengali Era,

corresponding to 1693 of the Christian Era, and therefore two centuries old. We quote a passage below from this edition of 1693, as well as the corresponding passage from the edition of 1803, and from an ordinary Bazar edition of 1893.*

* জায় বলে রাম তুমি জন্মিল উত্তম কুলে ।
 আদ্য পতি কাটিল তুমি পাইয়া কোন ফলে ॥
 দেখা দেবি মুখিতে যদি মুখিতে প্রতাপ ।
 অবেশ্য মারিলে প্রভু বড় পাইয়া তাপ ॥
 প্রভু মোর শাপ না দিলেন করণ হরহ ।
 মুক্তি শাপ দিব যেন হয় ত নিশ্চয় ॥
 সীতা উদ্ধারিবে তুমি আপন বিহনে ।
 সীতা যবে আসিবেন অনেক পরিগ্রহে ॥
 সীতা লইয়া বর করিবে যেন যনে আশ ।
 কত দিন রহি সীতা ছাড়িবে তোমার পাশ ॥
 তুমি যেমন কাল্পাইলে যানরের নারী ।
 তোমা করাইয়া সীতা যাবেন পাতাল পুরী ।

Edition of 1693.

জায় বলে ধার্মিক তুমি জন উত্তম কুলে ।
 অদ্য পতি কাটিলে রাম পাইয়া কোন ফলে ॥
 দেখা দেবি মুখিতে যদি মুখিতে প্রতাপ ।
 অবেশ্য বড় মারিলে প্রভু পাইয়া তাপ ॥
 প্রভু শাপ নাহি দিলেন করণ হরহ ।
 আশি শাপ দিব তোমা কলিগে নিশ্চয় ॥
 সীতা উদ্ধারিবে রাম আপন বিহনে ।
 সীতাকে আসিবে তুমি অনেক পরিগ্রহে ॥
 সীতা লইয়া বর করিবে বড় যনে আশ ।
 কত দিন থাকি সীতা ছাড়িবে তোমা পাশ ॥
 তুমি যেমন কাল্পাইলে কিকিয়া নররী ।
 তোমারে কান্দাইয়া সীতা যাবে বর্ণপুত্রী ॥

Edition of 1803 (Reprint).

A comparison of the three passages quoted below will indicate the nature of the alterations which Krittibas's text has undergone within the last two hundred years. We may assume that the text of 1693 was what Krittibas wrote, as there was little of mischievous editorial activity before that date, and printing was unknown in Bengal. The alterations made between 1693 and 1803 are of a verbal nature, and however much they may be regretted, they are slight in comparison with what followed. In the absence of any more correct edition, we may accept the edition of 1803 as Krittibas's work for the purposes

তারা বলে আমি তব জন্ম রণজুনে ।
 অনাগ্র প্ৰমোদে কেন বিনাশিলে তলে ॥
 মনুষ্যে মারিতে যদি দেখিতে প্রতাপ ।
 লুকাইবা মারিলে পাইলান বড় তাপ ॥
 ঈশ্বর তোমারে সবে বলে মর্যাবান ।
 ভাল কেপাইলে আজি তাহার প্রমাণ ॥
 একেবারে আমার করিতে সর্লীনাশ ।
 সুগ্ৰীবের প্রতি করা করিলে প্রকাশ ॥
 নিজেম গাভরা যত ছানই আপনি ।
 তবে কেন আমারে হে দিলে বনুসপি ॥
 প্রভু শাপ না দিলেন নবর ছন্দ ।
 আমি শাপ দিব ভাষা কহিলে নিশ্চয় ॥
 নীতা উদ্ধারবে হাম আপন বিক্রমে ।
 নীতগরে আশিরে যবে বড় পরিশ্রমে ॥
 কিছু নীতা না বহিবে মদ্য তব পাশ ।
 কিছু দিন থাকিয়া করিবে বর্ষবাস ॥
 কান্দাইবা সেইরূপ কিঙ্কিয়া নগরী ।
 কান্দাইবা তোমারে যাইবে পর্বপুত্রী ॥

Calcutta Edition of 1803.

of criticism, and we thank the Gupta Press for giving us a reprint of this first printed edition of the work. Since 1803, however, printed editions of the work have multiplied, and the mischievous activity of editors has increased. The late Pandit Jai Gopal of the Sanscrit College is reputed to have recast the older editions and to have produced the modern ones. Comparing the text of 1803 with that of 1893 we find that the somewhat loose metre of Kṛtibas has been rectified, the number of syllables has been adjusted, the expressive but homely words of the poet have been replaced by more refined expressions, some lines have been added and thrown in here and there, and the homely beauty of Kṛtibas's poetry has been lost. To our ear, Kṛtibas's irregular verse and loose metre have more true music and more genial force in them than the corrected metre, the Sanscritized expressions, and the more prolonged descriptions in the later editions of his work.

The Gupta Press has performed a patriotic work by reprinting the edition of 1803. But the task of producing an absolutely correct text of the work, from the old manuscripts still available, has yet to be done. The *Bangiya Sahitya Parishad* (Academy of Bengali Literature) has undertaken the task; and it will earn the gratitude of our countrymen by giving them a correct text of the immortal work of one of the earliest and greatest poets of Bengal.

Kaśiram Dās's work is perhaps less popular than that of Kṛtibas, and has been tampered with to a less extent. The great bulk of the work also, made further additions

inadvisable even to modern editors, and the more dignified nature of the style and the subject rendered such additions by no means an easy. But nevertheless verbal alterations have been made, as can be found out by comparison of a modern copy with an old manuscript. And the *Parishad* will perform a patriotic task by editing a correct edition of this work also.

The Bengali *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana* are the first great literary works in the Bengali language ; they are the foundations on which Bengali literature is built. And the people of modern Bengal will not rest content till they get back these great works in their integrity.



CHAPTER VI.

CHAITANYA AND HIS RELIGIOUS REFORM.

Sixteenth century.

WE have seen in the last two chapters that literary activity began in Bengal in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. The sixteenth century witnessed a great religious reform and a marked progress in philosophy and culture. Indeed similar movements were observable in every province of India in this age of renaissance and reform, which corresponds curiously with the age of renaissance and reform in Europe. It was in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries that Kabir preached religious reform in southern and northern India, that Chaitanya preached and worked in Bengal, and the great Nanak founded a reformed religion in the Punjab. It was in this age that Kasiram and Kritibas translated the ancient epics into Bengali, and they were immediately followed by the great Sridhar who translated the epics into Marathi, and by the equally great Tulasi Das who rendered the Ramayana into Hindi. It was in this age or shortly after, that Mukundaram in Bengal, and Tukaram in Bombay, distinguished themselves by original compositions which are still dear to their countrymen. And it was in this age also that

Raghunandan compiled a religious code for the Hindus of Bengal, and Raghunath started the school of philosophy which still attracts scores of students from all parts of India to the sacred precincts of Nadiya. The movements of the human mind are more widespread and far-reaching than historians generally suspect, and there are special eras of culture when the human mind all over the civilized world seems to expand under a vivifying influence, and moves onwards with a fresh vigour towards higher results. Such an era was the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries which produced men like Copernicus, Columbus and Luther in Europe; and such another era began in the eighteenth century which witnessed the Independence of America and the French Revolution. Chaitanya was the most remarkable product of the sixteenth century enlightenment in Bengal, and to a narration of his life and work we now address ourselves. His biographers, Krishna Das, Vrindavan Das and Lochan Das, have left us copious accounts of the life and work of their greater master, and though, as staunch Vaishnavas, they believed Chaitanya to be an incarnation of Krishna and have ascribed to him numberless miracles, yet it is not a difficult or a profitless task to glean from their accounts the real facts connected with the life of the great reformer of the sixteenth century.

About the middle of the 15th century, Upendra Misra, a wealthy and learned Vaishnava, lived in Sylhet. He had seven sons of whom Jagannath Misra migrated to the town of Nabadwip or Nadiya. He had eight

daughters by his wife Sachi, but none of them lived long. At last Sachi bore him two sons ; the elder was named Viswarup, and the younger was the future reformer of Bengal.

He was born in Nabadwip in the year 1485 A. D., that is about the time when the great Luther was born in Europe. The women of the family and the neighbourhood came to see and bless the infant, and named it Nimai, and notwithstanding that the learned men of the locality gave the child the more pompous name of Viswambhar, Nimai the child was called by all who knew him. Later in life he was called Gauranga, or the fair-complexioned, Krishna Chaitanya, or the incarnation of Krishna, and sometimes Gaur Hari, or the fair Krishna,—Chaitanya being of a very fair complexion, while Krishna, whose incarnation he was supposed to be, was dark. Chaitanya is said to have been born in the evening when there was an eclipse of the moon, and his poetic biographer explains the circumstances by arguing that there was no need for a spotted moon in the sky, when an unspotted moon had appeared on earth !

Various are the anecdotes recounted of the infancy and boyhood of Chaitanya, all tending to shew that he was an incarnate deity. While yet an infant “puking and mewling in its mother’s arm,” Chaitanya seems to have been very troublesome, and to have never ceased crying, till the word *Hari* was shouted by the people around him, this causing the name of Krishna to be preached and proclaimed before the infant had yet learnt to speak. On one occasion the little child was licking an

earthen toy, when Sachi came in, and reproved him for mistaking earth for food. "And what is food but earth and dust?" argued the lisping boy, "and what is our body but dust?" A restless and mischievous boy as he was, he teased the girls of the neighbourhood and quarrelled with other boys. When the girls came to the river-side with rice and other things to worship images, the little truant appropriated the food to his own use, and bade them worship him, for he was the great Master of the gods and goddesses they had come to worship. Flying from his enraged mother the little boy one day hid himself in an unclean vessel. This provoked Sachi who bade him instantly to go and bathe in the Ganga (Hugli River) to purify himself. The young sage however calmly replied that uncleanness dwelt not in outward things but in the mind. It may be easily imagined these and other anecdotes of a similar nature have been invented by the followers of Chaitanya to prove the godhead of their great master.

Chaitanya commenced his studies with Ganga Das Pandit and shewed great intelligence and aptitude for learning. It was about this time that the parents of Chaitanya began to think of a suitable match for his elder brother Viswarup, who was then in his early youth. Viswarup however was otherwise inclined; and filled with religious fervour, he left his home and turned a Saunyasi. The disconsolate mother had a yet severer trial awaiting her. It was not long after, that Jagannath Misra paid the debt of nature, and Nimal therefore was

the sole surviving stay and consolation of the bereaved widow.

In his earlier days, Chaitanya had made the acquaintance of a girl named Lakshmi, daughter of Ballabhacharja, when she had come to the river-side to worship. The young student now thought of marriage, and his widowed mother celebrated his marriage with Lakshmi with feelings of mingled joy and sorrow.

As Chaitanya advanced in years, he began to gather round him a large number of pupils, and his reputation as a scholar became great. The way in which philosophy, literature and religion have always been cultivated among the Hindus up to the time of the English conquest, and even since then, is well known. There were no regular academies, schools or colleges, as in Europe. The sages of ancient India, however, set themselves up as instructors, and gathered round them pupils varying in number according to their reputation for learning. Such pupils lived with their tutor in his house as members of the same family, looked on him as their father, and on his wife as their mother. Whatever might be their rank or status in society, they were all equal in his eyes, served him with equal fidelity during the period of their education, and vied with each other in obedience and respect towards him. The tutor received no fees, but the pupils looked to his cattle, milked his cows, begged food for his support, procured for him wood from the forest and water from the well, served him as his menial servants, and lived together in harmony and peace. When their education was completed, each

pupil was expected to make a handsome present to his tutor, and this,—often a considerable sum of money,—was all that the *guru* received for his pains. Each pupil would then return to his own rank and status in life, a few of the more clever and advanced setting themselves up as new tutors and gathering pupils around them. The ancient lore of India has been handed down from generation to generation in this simple arcadian style, and vestiges of such institutions are still to be found in Nadiya and many other places in India. Thus under the Hindu, the Muhammadan, and even the English rule, these quiet thinkers and professors have from century to century preserved and propounded the ancient learning of India, and often started new questions in philosophy or law, despising all exotic wisdom and foreign languages, be it the Persian, the Arabic, or the English, and forgetting, and forgotten by, a world of unquiet and aspiring statesmen, politicians and men of the world.

Chaitanya, then, set himself up as a tutor, gathered pupils around him, and his fame as a man of deep learning increased day by day. His reputation spread throughout and beyond the limits of Nadiya. He baffled those who came to beat him in learned controversies, and satisfied others who came in all humility to have their doubts explained. After winning the admiration of all people in his native place, he left his country and travelled into Eastern Bengal. Thither too his fame had spread, and numbers of people flocked around him to have the benefit

of his instructions. He reached the banks of the Padmavati and dwelt there for some months, instructing an ever increasing circle of friends. He then returned to his native place; but before he reached it his beloved wife had breathed her last.

Chaitanya continued to give instruction to his pupils at Nadiya; he was now called Nimai Pandit or Viśvambhar Pandit. He assembled his pupils early in the morning and taught them till about noon, after which he and his pupils went to the river-side together to bathe. Then they parted; and met again in the evening; and continued their literary labors till a late hour in the night.

The mother of Chaitanya became anxious to marry his son again, and the young Pandit was married to Vishnu Priya, the accomplished daughter of Sanatan whose learning had got for him the title of *Panditāraṇy*, or the prince of the learned. A pupil of Chaitanya, by name Buddhimaṇḍa, volunteered to pay the expenses of his tutor's marriage, and the ceremony was performed with great pomp. Soon after Chaitanya again left his native place and visited Gaya.

The visit to Gaya was the great turning point in the life of the reformer. Enthusiastic in his disposition, and attached to the faith of Krishna from his early youth, Chaitanya had, up to this time, lived and learned and taught much in the same way as other men did. But the sanctity of the place he visited, the instructions of Iswari Puri a devout Vaishnava, and the local religious associations of the place caused a thorough

change in the character of the ardent young man. He had gone to Gaya a noted scholar and a religious man, — he returned an enthusiastic reformer.

Now, for the first time, were seen those violent outward manifestations of faith and feeling which characterized the ardent worshippers of Krishna in those times. Fired with unwonted zeal, they were now and then overtaken by paroxysms of faith, and wept and laughed and danced like mad men. Horripilation, violent perspiration, and frequent fits of fainting marked these periods of religious ecstasy. The poor mother of Chaitanya trembled for her son, and marked with fear and concern the change in his demeanour, but it was beyond the power of domestic affection to make the reformer turn from the path he had chosen. It is not possible in the present age of reason to conceive the extent to which the mind can at times be subjected to the violent sway of religious feeling and fanaticism. Chaitanya was now a changed man ; he fired in his followers and pupils an ardent faith in Krishna ; he ignored all rites and ceremonies ; he proclaimed from house tops that the salvation of man depended solely on faith in Krishna. The town of Nabadwip suddenly rang with the loud *Sankirtan* of Krishna.

Day after day, Chaitanya and his followers assembled and proclaimed and preached the faith of Krishna. They met in the house of Sribas, where Nityananda, Adyaita, Sridhar, and a number of other devout followers anointed Chaitanya with water, sandal powder and flowers. Their number daily increased ; people of

all classes were struck with the zeal and piety of the new sect ; many joined it ; and people of all castes and denominations were welcomed to seek salvation through faith in Krishna.

In the meanwhile the rise of this sect raised violent opposition in many quarters. Hindus looked with distrust and fear on a religion which ignored all rites and distinctions of caste, while the Muhammadan Kazi of the town ordered all *Sankirtans* to be forthwith stopped. Chaitanya, however, boldly met the Kazi, and the result of the interview, we are assured, was that the Kazi himself pronounced the holy name of Krishna and was saved. Many miracles are ascribed to Chaitanya about this period ; but we pass them by.

Thus passed the first twenty-four years of the life of Chaitanya ; and now he felt within him a powerful call to proclaim the light that was in him through the length and breadth of India. It was the small still voice which he could not resist, it was the call of duty which could not be silenced by the entreaties of friends or the tears of a mother. In vain did Sachi attempt with many tears to dissuade her only friend on earth from leaving her a forlorn helpless widow ; in vain did even the devout followers of Chaitanya persuade him not to leave his native town. Chaitanya's heart was fixed and unmoved, and early in 1509, he became a Sanyasi and left his native town never to return again. During the remaining twenty-four years of his life he wandered as the apostle of Vaishnavism, and preached the faith of Krishna from the banks of the Cavery to those of the Jumna.

Chaitanya set out for Vrindavan on the banks of the Jumna, accompanied by Nityananda, Ratna and Mukunda, three of his followers. He crossed the Hugli, for Nabadwip was then on the east bank, and proclaimed the name of Krishna in every village through which he passed, to men, women and children. People were struck with his enthusiasm, and it is no wonder if many actually mistook the wild enthusiast for a deity. His follower Nityananda was one of those who would have liked to see his master always in his native town. It was not difficult to mislead Chaitanya from the right way to Vrindavan, and after three days' wanderings through several villages to the west of the Hugli, Nityananda brought back his master to the Hugli again. Chaitanya reproved his follower, but was obliged to cross the river and to rest for a few days in the town of Santipore. His follower Adyaita there received him with open arms and welcomed him to his house. News travelled to Nabadwip that the reformer had come back to Santipur, and all his friends and followers came to see him. Affecting indeed was the meeting of Chaitanya with his faithful followers whom he had left behind, but still more affecting was his meeting with his forlorn mother who came to Santipur to see his son once more. They insisted with many tears on his returning to Nabadwip, but Chaitanya had left his home as a Sanyasi and would not return. He consoled his mother however as best he could, assuring her that he would pass most of his time in Nilachala (Orissa), so that she would receive frequent news about him. To his followers he made the parting request that

they should proclaim the name and religion of Krishna in their homes as he was going to proclaim it all over India. They parted, once more, and Chaitanya set out on his travels.

Chaitanya now went southwards with Nityananda and others, passed through Jaipur, Katk and Kamalpur, visited the shrines of Sakshi Gopal, Bhuvaneswar and Kapoteswar, and at last reached Jagannath. This last is a place dedicated to Krishna, and the deep veneration and ecstasy with which Chaitanya viewed this place may easily be conceived. There too he met Sarabhabhuma, a learned and venerable man and a devout Vaishnava who received Chaitanya with open arms; and many and long were the religious controversies which they held together. From Jagannath, Chaitanya resolved to travel southwards. Nityananda and others offered to accompany him, but he wished to go alone, and was at last persuaded to take one Krishna Das, a simple-minded Brahman, as his sole companion. Southwards, then, went Chaitanya with Krishna Das, proclaiming the name of Krishna wherever he went. People flocked round him and were struck with his sanctity and enthusiasm, and numbers became converts. They returned to their villages, and told the wonderful tale and converted others. Thus, says the biographer of Chaitanya, the name of Krishna deluged the land as by an inundation.

At Jiar, Chaitanya rested a few days in the house of Ramananda Dai, a venerable and learned man, whom he instructed in the truths of his religion and soon fired with faith in Krishna. Thence he passed through numer-

ous villages, everywhere making converts. Atheists, Philosophers of different schools, Buddhists, and Saivas, all yielded the palm to the new reformer, and many were the converts he made. At last he reached the banks of the Cavery and rested four months at Sriranga (Seringapatam). He visited the southern Mathura (Madura), and then Rameswar, Chaitanya also visited Kanya Kumari (Cape Comorin) and the Malaya or the Nilgiri Hills. Thence he travelled northwards, crossed the Tapti and the Nerbudda, and visited Dandakaranya, Panpa, Pandubati and other places noted in the Ramayana. Near the sources of the Godaveri he was joined by his old friend Ramananda Rai who had come here to meet him. They travelled back to Orissa, and at Jagannath, Chaitanya was met by most of his friends. His vows forbade him to return to his native place, but Krishna Das the companion of all his travels was sent to Nabadwip with the joyful tidings of his return. It was with great joy that his followers came and met him once more in Nilachala.

Chaitanya and his followers remained at Jagannath during the Rath festival, and great were their rejoicings on the occasion. Prataparudra the king of Orissa expressed a desire to see the Vaishnava leader, but the Sanyasi's vow he had taken, forbade him to see a king. A sort of compromise was effected, the king's son visited the reformer, and Chaitanya blessed the father in the son, and they embraced his religion.

After a residence of a few months at Jagannath, Chaitanya resolved on visiting northern India. The

king was distressed at this news, and Sarhabhauma, Ramananda and Nityananda, all tried to dissuade him from the undertaking. Their persuasion however was fruitless, and at the close of the rainy season Chaitanya left Jagannath. He went northwards through Bhubaneswar, Katak, Remuna and Panihati, and came once more to Santipur. Affecting indeed was his meeting with his mother who had come to Santipur from Nabadwip, and who embraced her son with tears of joy.

Chaitanya once more took leave of his friends, sent back his mother to Nabadwip, and left Santipur. Among his companions were the brothers Rup and Sanatan, ministers of the Muhammadan ruler of Behar. They were of royal blood, and of high rank and much wealth, but despised all these things for their love of the reformer. Chaitanya's fame had now spread on all sides, and vast numbers of people gathered round him on his way towards Vrindavan. This was an inconvenience to a traveller, and Sanatan rightly advised him to part with all his companions if he wanted to proceed on his journey. The year however was far advanced, the rainy season had already commenced, Chaitanya therefore was compelled to remain a few months in Nilachala, to the great joy of king Prataprudra. At the close of the rains, he set out for Vrindavan with Balabhadra Bhattacharja as his sole companion.

To avoid notice Chaitanya left the beaten path, and went through a forest. His poetic biographer waxes eloquent, and describes how in the presence of the great master the tiger embraced the deer and danced with

joy, and how the name of Krishna, chanted by Chaitanya, made the flowers of the forest blossom and the birds chirp with glee. He passed through Benares and Allahabad, proclaiming the name of Krishna and making numerous converts as he went along. Great indeed was his ecstasy when he at last gazed on the Jumna and visited Mathura and Vrindavan. His whole life had been spent in proclaiming the name of Krishna, and his fervour and his ardent love reached their climax when he witnessed the scenes of Krishna's boyhood and early youth. His paroxysms of feeling came over him thick and frequent, and his life was endangered by the repeated fits of fainting that he underwent. From these scenes Chaitanya returned to Allahabad by the river. Here he was met by the brothers Rup and Ballabh, who had sacrificed wealth, rank and royal favor, and become devout Vaishnavas. Their eldest brother Sanatan had in the meantime got into a scrape. He too had resigned his service, but the king would not let him go so easily. Incensed at the conduct of Rup and Ballabh, the king ordered Sanatan to be confined. Escaping after many difficulties, Sanatan at last joined Chaitanya at Benares. Both Rup and Sanatan were learned men and authors of note, as we shall see in a future chapter, and long and numerous were the religious dialogues between Chaitanya and Sanatan at Benares. Sanatan was then sent to join his brothers at Vrindavan to preach the name of Krishna, and Chaitanya once more returned to his loving friends at Nilachala.

The remaining years of his life were passed by Chaitanya in Nilachala in meditations and in preaching the name of Krishna. His devoted followers occasionally came to visit him, the brothers Rupa, Sanatan and Ballabh came from Vrindavan and were received by Chaitanya with joy, but they were again sent back to Vrindavan. Raghunath Das was also sent to Vrindavan. Nityamunda and others remained with Chaitanya in Nilachala.

A curious story is told of the death of Chaitanya. One evening, as he was wandering on the sea-beach with his friends, he was suddenly struck at the sight of the bright moon-beams glittering on the blue waves of the sea. In one of those paroxysms which were so frequent with him, he mistook the sea for the blue waves of the Jumna. He ran into the sea in ecstasy, and soon after became insensible. His friends missed him and searched for him every where, and soon after, a fisherman brought to his disconsolate followers the body of their beloved master which he had fished up from the sea. Chaitanya died in 1533 at the early age of 48.

Such was the life of the great apostle of Hindu monotheism in Bengal. Chaitanya did not found a new religion. His religion is only a reformed phase of the Hindu religion. It recognizes Krishna as the Supreme Deity, ignores the caste system, and even admits Muhammadans as proselytes. In the present day, however, all lay Vaishnavas have adopted Hinduism and recognize the caste system, and it is only among the mendicant Vaishnavas that the religion of Chaitanya is found to pre-

vail, in its integrity. In this respect Vaishnavism resembles Buddhism which has its monks and its lay disciples ; and indeed scholars are aware that Vaishnavism itself is a modern survival of Buddhism under a Hindu guise. Buddhism in an idolatrous form prevailed during many centuries after the Christian era in Orissa, and the worship of Buddha, recognized by Hindus as one of the incarnations of Vishnu, now survives in a Hindu guise in the worship of Jagannath.



CHAPTER VII.

THE FOLLOWERS OF CHAITANYA.

Sixteenth century.

WE have in the preceding chapter given a sketch of the life and work of Chaitanya. In the present chapter we shall very briefly review the work of some of the companions of the reformer,—the Apostles of Vaishnavism in Bengal.*

Among the followers of Chaitanya, Adyaita and Nityananda stand foremost. Indeed, the Vaishnavas of Bengal regard them as partial incarnations of Vishnu, as part and parcel of the spirit which had its full manifestation in Chaitanya.

In the preceding chapter we have had frequent occasion to notice the acts of these leaders, nor is there much to add. Adyaita was a wealthy and respected inhabitant of Santipur, and is said to have prophesied the birth of Chaitanya, and sent his wife to Nabadwip when the great reformer was born. After Chaitanya had left his home as a Sanyasi, never to return, the house of Adyaita at Santipur was more than once the meeting place where the Vaishnavas of Bengal flocked to see their master, returned from his travels. All through his life, Adyaita, though himself a wealthy man, held the poor

* For much of the information contained in this chapter we are indebted to Ram Das Sen's paper on the works of the Vaishnava Leaders of Bengal.

wandering reformer in deep veneration. The descendants of Adyaïta still live in Santipur, and are held by all Vaishnavas in the highest regard.

Nityananda was perhaps the most esteemed companion of Chaitanya. He was a wealthy inhabitant of Nabadwip, and is said to have been by no means indifferent to the good things of this life. Yet Chaitanya held him in high respect and bestowed on him the title of *Prabhu*. His descendants are yet living. The Goswamis of Khardaha are descended from him by the male line, and those of Balagor by the female line. Chaitanya, Adyaïta and Nityananda are spoken of by the Vaishnavas of Bengal as the three *Prabhux*. They were all Brahmins by birth, and none of them seems to have written any books either in Sanskrit or in Bengali.

Next to these come the six great writers who are known as the Vaishnavacharjas of Bengal. They are Rup Goswami, Sanatan Goswami, Jiva Goswami, Gopal Bhatta, Raghunath Bhatta and Raghunath Das. It is much to be regretted that they have all written in Sanskrit,—the highest efforts of their genius appear feeble and common-place because they are misdirected. High indeed, in the rolls of the early Bengali authors, had the names of Rup and Sanatan stood, if they had written in their native tongue. As it is, their names are generally known only among Vaishnavas, and the proud position which they might have occupied is ceded to Mukunda Ram and other writers who composed in the language of the people. It is a lesson which has a special application in the present day.

We have already noticed the prominent facts in the lives of the brothers Rupa and Sanatan in the preceding chapter. They were of royal blood, being descended from a prince of the Carnatic, and held high positions under the Muhammadan ruler of Behar. Fanatics and enthusiasts have always succeeded in gathering round them a number of ignorant people, but the reformer of the sixteenth century must have indeed had a strange power to induce men of wealth and influence to descend from their high position in society, to be his humble followers. Rupa and Sanatan gave up their posts, sacrificed wealth, rank and royal favor, disregarded royal wrath, and braved persecution, in order to become humble Vaishnavas.

Rupa Goswami has written several books. *Ujjwala Nilamani* is a book on Sanscrit rhetoric in prose and verse. Under the plea of describing the life and acts of Krishna, the writer discourses on love, piety and devotion. *Hansa Duta* describes the distress of Radha and the milk-maids of Gokula in the absence of Krishna. They at last send a goose as a messenger to Krishna, and hence the name of the book. *Uddhava Sandesa* describes the agony of Krishna in the absence of Radha, and the lover at last sends Uddhava as a messenger to the beloved, hence the name of the book. *Srirupa Chintamani* describes the beauty of Krishna, and *Mathura Mahatmya*, as the name implies, describes the glory of Mathura. Many other poems also were written by this voluminous versifier.

Sanatan Goswami has written very much less than

his brother. His *Gitanali* describes the Doljatra, Rasa, and other festivities held in honor of Krishna.

Jiva Goswami was the son of Ballabh, the brother of Rup and Sanatan. His great work is *Skat Sandarbha* which, as its name signifies, is divided into six parts, and describes religious and devotional feelings.

Gopal Bhatta was the son of Bankasa Bhatta of the village Bhattamari. During his travels Chaitanya stopped for a period of four months in his house, and the religious fervour and instructions of the reformer left an impression on the mind of the young Bhatta. Soon after the departure of Chaitanya, Gopal left home and family and turned a wanderer like his master. He stopped for a time at Benares with a learned teacher, and turning a regular Sanyasi went to Vrindavan, where he joined Rup, Sanatan and other Vaishnava luminaries. He wrote several works, of which *Hari-bhakti-silasa* is the best known. It treats of the duties of Vaishnavas.

Raghunath Das was a Kayastha by birth, and the son of a wealthy man. The *Bhaktamala* states that he left property worth nine lacs and a young wife of exceeding beauty and loveliness for his love of Chaitanya. He met the reformer at Jagannath, and Chaitanya held him in great esteem and love. Afterwards he went to Vrindavan and lived with the celebrated Vaishnavas of that place. Though a Kayastha by birth, he received from Chaitanya the title of Acharja, and lived with the five other Acharjas. These last were all Brahmans by birth, but neither Chaitanya nor his followers recognized

caste inequalities. His *Vilapakusumanjali Stotra* is the prayer of a devout Vaishnava perplexed with the troubles of this world, and his *Manasiksha* treats of the training of the mind to the love of Krishna.

Krishna Das and Vrindavan Das and Lochan Das, the biographers of Chaitanya, though not strictly speaking his companions, may come in for a notice here. They have written in Bengali, and their works are very popular with Vaishnavas.

Vrindavan Das was the son of Narayani who from her girlhood was devotedly attached to the faith of Chaitanya. Pandit Ramgati has erroneously supposed her to be the daughter of Srivas a follower of Chaitanya. The author himself informs us that his mother was the daughter of a brother of Srivas.* And it was in the house of Srivas that the little girl, then four years old, first saw the reformer, and ever after loved him and his religion. It would appear therefore, that Vrindavan Das wrote his book about the middle of the 16th century, and after the death of Chaitanya.

We confess we cannot discover much beauty or poetic excellence in his book *Chaitanya Bhagavat*, and if it is a popular book with Vaishnavas we can only ascribe the fact to its being the first book describing the life and acts of Chaitanya. Krishna Das is lavish in his praise of Vrindavan's work, and indeed compares Vrindavan to the great Vyasa of ancient India. But we confess we turn with ~~we~~ sort of relief from Vrindavan's affected

* Vide pp. 123 of *Chaitanya Bhagavat*.

style and dreary Sanscrit quotations to the simpler narrative of Krishna Das himself.

Krishna Das was born at Jhamaipur near Katwa in the district of Hurdwan, and was a Vaidya by caste. He was a devout Vaishnava and travelled to Vrindavan, in which place he probably composed his *Chaitanya Charitamrita*. The date of the book is not known. Very probably it was written some twenty years after Vrindavan Das had written his book. It is, we think, in every respect superior to the work of Vrindavan Das; the style is simple, and the writer apparently writes with feeling. The description of the rejoicings in Nabadwip at the birth of Chaitanya, the account of Sachi's parting with her beloved son, and the description of the Rathajatra ceremony at Jagannath, are all instinct with feeling.

The third biography of Chaitanya is *Chaitanya Mangal* of Lochan Das. It is not considered a book of high authority by the Vaishnavas.

Other voluminous Vaishnava works like Narahari's *Bhaktiratnakar* and Madhava's *Bhagavatara*, well-known works in their days, are now well nigh forgotten. Madhava is said to have also written a work on *Chandi* which has been replaced by the more meritorious work composed by Mukundaram.

CHAPTER VIII.

RAGHUNATH AND HIS SCHOOL OF LOGIC.

Sixteenth century.

HISTORY repeats itself. The human mind often moves forward in the same direction, and by the same path, when inspired with fresh vigour and fresh light. There can be little in common between the age of rationalism and reform in ancient India,—the sixth century before Christ, and the age of renaissance in modern India,—the sixteenth century after Christ. The Hindu nation was free and the Hindu mind was untrammelled in the ancient age; the nation was subject to a foreign rule and its energies and thoughts were cribbed and confined in the modern age. But nevertheless it is impossible not to recognize in the renaissance of the sixteenth century after Christ a pale reflection of the movement which was witnessed in the sixth century before Christ.

Buddhism had almost died out in Bengal, but it was Buddhist monastic institutions and Buddhist principles of human equality and brotherhood which were renovated in a Hindu guise in modern Vaishnavism. And Chaitanya therefore is the modern counterpart of Gautama Buddha. Ancient Hindu philosophy and logic were scarcely known in Bengal before the sixteenth century; it was in that *mark* that the philosophical school

of Nabadwip was started, and Raghunath is the modern counterpart of Kapila. And lastly, Hindu orthodoxy was alarmed at the spread of heterodox and philosophical speculations in ancient India as in modern Bengal, sacred laws and rules of orthodox rites were carefully compiled and insisted upon, and Raghunandan of modern Bengal is the counterpart of Vasishtha and Gautama and other ancient compilers of sacred laws. We are afraid to proceed further with this parallel; it would be misleading to suggest a very close resemblance between India in the sixth century, B. C. and India in the sixteenth century A. D. All that we wish to indicate is that the Hindu mind in the modern age has, under the influence of new light and progress, travelled once more in the same direction, though with feeble effort, as it did in the days of its ancient vigour.

Mithila or North Behar was one of the most advanced kingdoms in India from the time of Janaka in the epic age, and took a prominent part in the progress of philosophy and thought which marked the seventh and sixth centuries before Christ. It is possible that Gautama the founder of logic flourished in Behar; it is certain that logical studies were kept up in the schools of Mithila by an uninterrupted succession of scholars and teachers. Pakshadhara Misra was the last of these eminent scholars, and had his crowded *shol* of logic in Mithila in the fifteenth century; and Vasudeb of Nabadwip was one of the scholars who learnt logic in his school.

Vasudeb returned to Nabadwip with the title of Sarabhabhauṃa, and set himself up as a teacher, and the three great men whose deeds have shed a bright light on the sixteenth century,—Chaitanya, Raghunath and Raghunandan,—all received their instruction in their early days from this prince of teachers.

Raghunath was a poor orphan and was blind of one eye from his birth. In school he often puzzled the venerable Vasudeb by his questions, and his eager and inquisitive mind was not satisfied with the traditional solutions of difficult problems. It is said that young Chaitanya and young Raghunath were intimate friends, and that the doubts and anxious enquiries of Raghunath were often solved for him by the future reformer with his clear intellect and his strong natural good sense. Raghunath thanked his friend for such assistance, and hoped to pursue philosophical studies with him through life. — But their paths lay in different directions; Chaitanya went in for religious reform, and Raghunath, at the early age of twenty, left his home and repaired to Mithila to complete his study of logic in that renowned “university-town.”

Old Pakshadhara Misra was still alive, and welcomed his pupil's pupil to his school. In a short time however he perceived that the mind of the young man was cast in a different mould from that of ordinary students, and that traditional learning did not satisfy him. Many were the enquiries with which the young student puzzled his venerable teacher, and the fame of Raghunath spread far and wide.

It was necessary for a student on the completion of his education to signalize himself in a trial, and to win his title. Young Raghunath fearlessly entered into a discussion with his teacher, and did not hesitate to demolish his arguments. But it was not possible for the venerable Professor of logic to confess a defeat in the very place where generations of students had looked up to him as infallible. With a pardonable weakness, Pakshadhara concealed his defeat in a cloud of sophistry, and humiliated his ardent opponent with bitter taunts and ridicule. Young Raghunath left the school humiliated, and to all appearance beaten in the discussion.

A story is then told for the accuracy of which it is impossible to vouch, but which is worth repeating. Smarting under disgrace and undeserved humiliation, the young student is said to have sought the house of his teacher by night, on vengeful thoughts intent. The object of his ambition was lost, and his prospect in life was ruined; for it would be impossible to convince the Hindu world that the great Pakshadhara was wrong and the unknown young student was right. His apparent defeat and humiliation had ruined his prospects; he could win no title now and could open no school, no students would gather round him and no one would credit his acquirements and learning. A blow had been struck, such as only the heavy hand of a man, great in rank and reputation, can strike on an unknown but aspiring youth. The blow had fallen with fatal effect and it was impossible to recover from it; and the career for which young Raghunath had laboured for years, and which was

the dream of his ambition, was lost for ever. Raghunath was a ruined man, and Raghunath stole into his teacher's house,—a desperate man.

The light of the full-moon fell on Pakshadhara's house as the old professor and his wife sat on the roof. The gentle housewife was trying to please her husband, but something troubled him and preyed on him. He seldom replied to her and scarcely heard what she said. To all appearance he had demolished young Raghunath in the discussion held that day, but the good old teacher could not forgive himself the art he had practised, and he felt within himself that for once in his life he had been fairly beaten, though none knew it.

Pakshadhara woke from his reveries when his gentle wife spoke of the moon-beams and asked,—“Is there anything in this world, lord, which is clearer and brighter than the light of the autumn moon?” “Yes, lady,” replied involuntarily the hoary professor, “there is a young student who has come to my school from Nabadwip;—his intellect is brighter and clearer than the light of the autumn moon.”

Raghunath heard this conversation, his angry thoughts were dispelled, he rushed forward and fell at his beloved professor's feet. Pakshadhara raised him and embraced him, and the next day he confessed and proclaimed before all that Raghunath had really beaten him in the discussion of the preceding day. The triumph of Raghunath was complete, and he returned to Nabadwip and founded the school of logic in that place which has continued to be most renowned

school of logic in India during these three centuries.

The story narrated above probably only gives a concrete shape the fact that, since the sixteenth century, the school of logic at Mithila has declined, and the school of logic at Nabadwip has prospered. An uninterrupted line of renowned logicians have flourished in that town from the town of Raghunath to the present day.*

Raghunath was still a poor man, but learning has always been honoured in this country by high and low alike, and it is said that a substantial cowherd of the name of Hari Ghosh helped the young professor to build his *tal*. Students from all parts of India came to the scholar who had beaten Pakshadhara in logic, and Raghunath lived to be a great and a famous man.

His great work in logic is *Chintamani Diddhi*. Any attempt to explain the contents of this book would be beyond the scope of the present volume.

* I paid a visit to a *tal* of logic in Nabadwip in 1876, and met students there from all parts of India. On my asking them the reason of their coming to Bengal for education, they told me that while the Vedas were taught at Benares, and other branches of learning in other places, Logic was nowhere taught as thoroughly as at Nabadwip.

CHAPTER IX.

RAGHUNANDAN AND HIS INSTITUTES.

Sixteenth century.

WE have remarked in the preceding chapter that Mithila or North Behar was one of the most cultured kingdoms in ancient India. Among all the nations of the Epic Age, the Videhas of Mithila were considered the most cultured. And when the nations of the Epic Age declined in power, the Magadhas of South Behar took the lead, and were for centuries the most powerful and the most enlightened nation in India. There can be little doubt that Bengal was first colonized by Aryans from Behar, *i.e.*, from the sister kingdoms of Mithila and Magadha, and that for two thousand years Bengal received culture and knowledge from her western sisters. And when the light of modern literature and philosophy and religious reform dawned on Bengal in the fourteenth, fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, we still mark that the light proceeded from the west. Chandidas's poetry was inspired by Bidyapati and other poets of Mithila; Chaitanya's reform was a survival and a revival of the monastic Buddhism of Magadha; Raghunath's school of logic was an offshoot of the schools of Mithila; and lastly Raghunandan's compilation of sacred laws was in imitation of such compilations made in Mithila.

Since the sixteenth century, however, Bengal has taken the lead. Chandidas has been followed by a host

of poets and writers in Bengal, down to the present century, whose equals Behar has not produced. Vaishnavism still flourishes in Bengal, and has been succeeded by the more enlightened Brahmoism, based on the same principles of human equality and brotherhood, while Magadha has witnessed no religious reforms in modern times. And lastly the philosophical school of Raghunath, founded in Nabadwip, is at the present day the most renowned school of Hindu logic in India, while philosophy and logic have declined in Mithila.

The compilation of sacred laws for the regulation of the conduct of Aryan Hindus began in India before the time of Buddha; and in those days each Sutra-Charana or distinct Sutra school had its separate body of laws for the use of the followers of that particular school. The Charanyavyuha names five distinct Charanas or schools of the Rig Veda, twenty-seven of the Black Yajur Veda, fifteen of the White Yajur Veda, twelve of the Sama Veda, and nine of the Atharva Veda.

The spread of Buddhism somewhat dislocated the old arrangements, and the distinctions between the separate Sutra schools were lost. The institutes of Manu, which in their existing form belong approximately to the time of Christ, do not connect themselves with any particular Sutra school, but profess to be the rules for all Aryan Hindus. In other respects, however, Manu's institutes are still archaic; they recognize Vedic gods and Vedic sacrifices, and ignore the modern Hindû Trinity, and condemn the worship of images.

In later times, after the decline of the old Hindu

traces of Northern India, and even after the conquest of India by the Muhammadans, bodies of sacred law still continued to be compiled or recast. And these modern compilations, like those of Vyasa and Parasara, inculcate modern Hinduism and modern usages, and the worship of images.

The entire body of sacred laws, *viz.*, the *Sūtras*, Manu's institutes, and the later law books, are spoken of together as *Smṛiti*; and the study of *Smṛiti* is still a very important portion of orthodox training all over India. It may well be imagined that the study of *Smṛiti* was not neglected in Mithila, and spread from Mithila to Bengal.

In the ninth century after Christ, Medhatithi flourished in Mithila, and wrote the first great and authoritative commentary on Manu's institutes. Bengal followed the lead, and soon distanced her western sister. Kullukabhatta was the son of Dīhakarabhatta, and was born near Gaur in the fourteenth century. His commentary on Manu's institutes has almost replaced all others, and has been pronounced by so great an authority as Sir William Jones to be the most clear, the most concise, and the most perspicuous commentary that has ever been written.

In the eleventh century after Christ, Vijnanesvara of Western India compiled the law of succession, called the *Mitākshara*, which prevails in Behar and in the west. The law of succession in Bengal is somewhat different; and in the fourteenth century, Jīmatavahana of Bengal compiled the *Dayabhaga*, which has since been considered the authoritative work on Hindu succession in

Bengal, Colebrooke has translated both *Mitakshara* and *Dayabhaga* into English.

But it was left to Raghunandan to compile a complete code of rules for religious rites and observances, as they obtain in Bengal in the modern age. Raghunandan was also of Nahadwip, and was by about twenty years junior to Chaitanya and Raghunath; and he is said to have also received his early training from the venerable Vasudeb Sarabhabhaua. No other school master in the world has perhaps turned out such three brilliant and great men as Chaitanya, Raghunath and Raghunandan !

While Chaitanya devoted himself to religious reform, while Raghunath spent his life in philosophical and logical studies, Raghunandan made his mark by an authoritative and exhaustive compilation of the rules of orthodox rites and observances for the people of Bengal. He divided this great work into twenty-eight chapters, each devoted to a separate subject,* and he based his rules on a profusion of quotations from the highest authorities. He laboured for twenty-five

* He himself specifies the twenty-eight subjects thus :—

যদিমুখে বায়ভাগে সংসারে শুদ্ধিনির্দেশ ।
 অংগশিক্তে বিবাহে চ চিত্তে অকষ্টমী জতে ॥
 ভূগোৎসবে ব্যবহৃতলোকাদশাধিনির্দেশে ।
 তত্ত্বাব ভবনোৎসর্গে ব্যবহৃতলোক জতে জতে ॥
 প্রতিষ্ঠাধাঃ পতীকামাঃ জ্যোতিষে বাঙ্গলয়কে ।
 দীক্ষায়াঃ আত্মিক কৃত্তে ক্রোড়ে শ্রীপুত্ৰনোত্তমে ॥
 নামশাক্ষে বহুঃশাক্ষে শূরকৃৎ গবিকারণে ।
 ইত্যন্তাধিশক্তি হানে অক্সঃ বস্যাঃমি যতঃ ॥

years over this great work, and it remains a monument, not only of his industry and learning, but also of his comprehensive genius.

It is needless to state that Raghunandan's institutes, though still considered the authoritative work in the matter of rites and observances in Bengal, is losing its importance with the progress of the times. An orthodox work which insists with the utmost rigour on distinctions between Brahmans and non-Brahmans (miscalled Sudras) must lose its weight in an age when the non-Brahmans also claim to be true born Aryan Hindus, entitled to the learning and the privileges of Aryan Hindus. A work which multiplies and insists on purile rites and hurtful restrictions must become obsolete, when the rites are ignored and the restrictions are disregarded, in pursuit of progress and national well-being. A work which lays down the duties of Hindu widows with cruel severity, and recommends the burning of widows on the pyre, must fall into disrepute when widow-marriage has been legalized, and the burning of widows has been stamped out as an offence and a crime against humanity. A more advanced and healthier compilation of rules for the social and religious use of modern Hindus, based on their ancient scriptures, has become a desideratum.

These remarks should not be considered as a reflection against Raghunandan ; it is no fault of that great compiler that the times have changed, and that the rules compiled by him are no longer observed. The scholar and the student can respect the laws of Manu or of Justinian, although those laws have

become obsolete among modern Hindus and modern Romans.

The school of *Smṛiti* started by Raghunandan still continues in Nabadwip. Eminent teachers have handed down the traditional learning from generation to generation, and students still attend the *Smṛiti* *toṭi* of that classic town, the Oxford of Bengal.

Besides *Āyaya*, and *Smṛiti* other branches of Sanscrit learning have also been studied in Bengal. In *Vyākaraṇa* or grammar, Bopadeva of Bengal is the greatest writer that modern India has produced. And Krishnananda of Nabadwip, who was a contemporary of Chaitanya, was a great compiler of *Tantra* literature, a literature which flourishes in Bengal only among all the provinces of India. We do not believe however that the other provinces lose much by the absence of this class of literature, as it only reproduces Buddhist superstitious rites and practices in a Hindu guise, with much that is dark, cruel and reprehensible. Similar Tantra works and Tantra practices are known in Thibet and other Buddhist countries to this day.

CHAPTER X.

MUKUNDA RAM AND HIS CHANDI.

Seventeenth century.

THE brilliant sixteenth century, which witnessed the rise of Chaitanya, Raghunath and Raghunandan in Bengal, also witnessed the conquest of that country by the great Akbar, with the help of his Hindu generals Todar Mallu and Man Sinha. These events influenced the national mind, and the first original poem in Bengali, apart from songs and translations, was composed in the seventeenth century. Mukunda Ram Chakrabarti has fortunately left us some account of himself and his times. He was born in the village of Daminya, near Salimabad, in the District of Burdwan. He was the son of Hriday Misra, and the grandson of Jagannath Misra, and he had an elder brother of the name of Kabi Chandra. He tells us that when Man Sinha became the ruler of Bengal, the oppression of a subordinate Muhammadan officer drove him from his home, and that after long wanderings he found a kind protector in Bankura Deb, a Zemindar in the District of Midnapur. The seat of this Zemindar was in the village of Anna, and he engaged the learned guest as a tutor to his son, Raghunath, who subsequently succeeded his father in the estate, and finds frequent mention in the poet's work.

It is so seldom that a poet leaves us an account of himself and his times, that we cannot resist the tempta-

tion of quoting the whole of the account left by Mukunda Ram in a note.* We give the substance of it in English.

* গ্রন্থ উৎপত্তির কারণ ।

শুন তাই সভাঙ্গন কবিরের বিবরণ
এই গীত হৈল যেন মত ।
উরিয়া বাগের বেশে কবির নিগর হোশে
চরিতকা বসিলা আচাধিতে ।
মহর সিংহিমাঙ্গল বাগাতে নজর রাজ
বিসয়ে নিচোরাই গোপীনাথ ।
তাহার তালুকে বসি নাথিনাতে চাষ-চানি
নিবাস পুরুষ ছয় লাভ ।
বহু রাজা মানসিংহ বিজয়রে যেবা ভূম
গৌড় সহ উৎকল মহীল ।
রাজা মানসিংহের কালে প্রজার পাণের কলে
জীহীবার মাহুদ সরিল ।
উজির হইলা বাকি আশা বেগারিরে দেহ দেবা
ত্রাঙ্গন বৈষ্ণবের হইল অরি ।
কোণে কোণে দিয়া নড়া পনের কাঠের কুড়
নাহি জনে প্রজার গোছারি ।
মহকার হইল কাল ঝিল ভূমি জোখে মাল
বিনা উপকারে ধার দুক্তি ।
পোকির হইল যম টাকা আড়াই আনা কম
পাই লভা লয় দিন কতি ।
জীহীবার অবোধ পোজ কড়ি বিলে নাহি রোজ
ধাক্ক খোজ কেহ নাহি কেনে ।
অল্প গোপীনাথ নন্দী দিপাকে হইলা নন্দী
হেতু কিছু নাহি পরিত্রাণে ।
জামিনকে প্রতীত আছে প্রজার পলাই পাছে
হুকার তাপিয়া দেহ থানা ।
প্রজা হইল আকুলি বেচে ঘরের কুড়ালি
টাকাও ত্রক বেচে নশ আনা ।

The ancestors of Mukunda Ram to the sixth or seventh generation lived in the petty village of Daminya, engaged in agricultural pursuits. It appears that when

নগর শ্রীমন্ত খাঁ চণ্ডী বাড়ী বার খাঁ
 গুজি কৈলা সুমিত খাঁর মনে ।
 বাহিন্যা ছাড়িয়া বাই নরেন্দ্র রক্ষাধাণ আই
 যথেষ্ট চণ্ডী দিলা করশনে ।
 স্ত্রেটনায় উপনীত ত্রণ রাগ দিন দিত
 বহু কুতু তিনি কৈলা রক্ষা ।
 দিয়া আপনার ঘর নিবারণ কৈল তর
 দিবস জিনের দিন ক্রিয়া ।
 বাহিন্য বরাই নদী সমাই অরুর নিদি
 নেউটিয়া হইল উপনীত ।
 দাক্ষকেশব জরি পাইল পাণ্ডুর সুরি
 গঙ্গাতায় বড় কৈল হিত ।
 নারায়ণ পরামর একাইল দামোদর
 উপনীত কুটোয়া নগর ।
 তৈল বিলা কৈলু যান করিলু উলক পান
 শিক্ত কাকৈ গুলনের তরে ।
 আশ্রম পুরি আড়া নৈবেদ্য শালুক খোড়া
 পূজা কৈলু কুবের অহনে ।
 কুদাণ পরিগ্রমে দিহা যাই সেই ধামে
 চণ্ডী দেখা দিলেন বশমে ।
 হাতে লইয়া পরা নদী আপনি করনে নদি
 ননো ছন্দে লিখেন কবিত্ব ।
 পড়েছি অনেক তর নাহি জানি কোনে রত্ন
 আত্মা দিলা জপি নিত্য নিত্য ।
 দেবী চণ্ডী মহা মংগ দিলেন রত্ন ছায়া
 আত্মা দিলেন রক্তে ললীত ।
 চণ্ডীর আদেশ পাই শিলা পার হইয়া বাই
 আরড়ার হইলু উপনীত ।

Man Sinha became the ruler of Bengal, Muhammad Sharif, an oppressive man, was invested with power and influence, and as a consequence the people were grievously oppressed. Brahmans and Vaishnavas, traders and agriculturists, were subjected to equal tyranny; fallow lands were entered as arable; 15 katas of land were reckoned as a bigah by a vicious system of measurement. Every Rupee was short by $2\frac{1}{2}$ annas. The agriculturists began to sell off their cattle and grain, of which there was a glut in the market, so that things of the value of a rupee sold for 10 annas. Gopinath Nandi, the Talukdar under whom the poet held his lands, and who is described as a pious man, got into a scrape and was imprisoned.

আরজা ব্রাহ্মণ কৃষি পুঙ্খের পুঙ্খের খাবী
 নরপতি খ্যাসের সমান ।
 গড়িয়া কবির বাণী মন্তাবিস্তু কৃপনপি
 পাঁচ আড়া মালি মিল মান ।
 হুৎত বাকুড়া তার ভাবিল সকল তার
 শিক্ত পাছে কৈল নিরোজিত ।
 তার হুত বধুনাথ রাজগুণে অবদাত
 গুল বলি করিল পুজিত ।
 সঙ্গে শ্রীমান নন্দী সে জানে স্বপন মল্লি
 অনুবিন করিল মতন ।
 নিত) সেন অমুমতি বধুনাথ নরপতি
 বাসনেধের হিন্দেন ভূষণ ॥
 বীর নাথের হুত রূপে গুণে অদভূত
 বীর বাকুড়া ভাগ্যবান ।
 তার হুত বধুনাথ রাজ গুণে অবদাত
 শ্রীকবি কবণে রস পান ।

After consultation with the wise Srimanta Khan of Chandibati, our poet left the home of his fathers in bitter grief to seek shelter elsewhere. He reached Bhetna, where Jadu Kundu, as the poet gratefully records, gave him food and shelter for three days. Honest Jadu Kundu! Little did he dream when, in compliance with one of the most amiable customs of the country, he gave shelter to a poor houseless stranger, that for his good service, for which he sought no return, his name would live in immortal verse. The poet then went down the Gharai and crossed the Darakeswar, and reached Pandurpur, where Gangadas did him some service. At last Mukunda Ram crossed the Damodar and reached Kuchutya in much distress, the children crying for food. Oppressed with hunger, the poet fell asleep near a tank, and saw the goddess Chandi in a vision, and she bade him sing her glory. Soon after, the poet found shelter in the village of Anra in the district of Midnapur, where he accosted the zemindar Bankura Deb in verse for which he was rewarded with five *aris* of dhan. The zemindar received the talented stranger with open arms, and engaged him as a tutor to his son, Raghunath. In those days zemindars delighted in gathering learned and talented men round them, and as there was no reading public, this was the only sort of encouragement that learning received.

Mukunda Ram, who obtained the title of Kabi Kankan, had two sons, Sivaram and Mahesh, and two daughters Chitralekha and Jashoda. The descendants of the poet still live, not in Daninya, but in the neighbouring

village of Baizan. The descendants of Raghunath, the pupil and protector of the poet, live in Senapat a village about four miles from Anra; their estates have all been taken over by the Raja of Burdwan.

Mukunda Ram has left us two poems. The first is the tale of Kalaketu, a hunter, and his wife Fullara; and the other one is the celebrated story of Srimanta Sadagar. We will briefly narrate the plot of each poem.

The book begins, as usual, with prayers to several gods and goddesses, and with an account of Chandi, her previous existence as the daughter of Daksha, the destruction of his celebrated sacrifice by Siva, Chandi's second birth as the daughter of the Himalayas, the destruction of Kama, the grief and religious penances of Chandi, and her final union with Siva.* Then follows the story of Kalaketu.

Kalaketu the hero of the poem is a hunter of low birth, and proves to be the strongest among the strong. He frequents the wood every day with his bow and arrows, and kills wild beasts, often fighting numbers of them single-handed. His fame as a brave young hunter increases day by day, and in course of time he is married to Fullara. The married life of Kalaketu and

* For want of space we are unable to make any extracts, but the reader will find many passages in this part of the work full of the choicest humor. We would refer him to the disputes between Hanu and Parvati, as well as to the regrets of women at their own evil fate, when they see the handsome face and form of the bridegroom, Siva. Most of our readers know the celebrated passages of Bharat Chandra on similar subjects, but most of them do not know that these passages of Bharat Chandra are only imitations from the original of Mukunda Ram.

Fullara has been well depicted by the poet, and the strongest impression that one receives from a perusal of the poem is its intense reality. The hunter, strong and robust, but somewhat rude in his habits, frequents the forests and lives on the proceeds of his spoil. And the poor but faithful Fullara takes the meat to the market, cooks food for her husband, and administers to his wants like a careful housewife that she is.

But Chandī will not allow her favourite Kalaketu to pine in poverty. She appears in his hut during his absence as a woman of superb beauty, and gives Fullara to understand that she is desirous of sharing with her the affections of Kalaketu. Poor, simple-minded Fullara! She is in a great fright at seeing a rival of such beauty, and with ill-concealed jealousy she advises her to return to her husband, and never to leave the paths of virtue. A long conversation ensues, and the whole is one of the most interesting passages in the work. The fair intruder however is immovable, and we almost think we see the smile of ridicule which curls her sweet lips as she listens to her rival. Fullara then discourses on her own sorrows, and tries to dissuade the fair visitant from sharing them, and the eloquence with which she dwells on her poverty and troubles all the twelve months in the year, would almost affect any listener. But the disguised goddess says, truly enough, that she has wealth of her own with which she will make Kalaketu happy. Throughout the passage the replies of the goddess have a double meaning. Most of our Bengali readers are familiar with the

account in Bharat Chandra's poetry, which Chandi gives of herself to Iswar the ferryman when he takes her across the river. The goddess, while virtually giving a true account of herself, makes the ferryman believe that she is a poor woman who has left her husband's home in grief. But most of our readers are *not* aware that the passage is only a copy of a similar passage in Mukunda Ram's poetry, and in some places it is a copy word for word.*

* We give a few extracts here from the remarkable conversation between Fellara and Chandi, but prudently refrain from venturing to translate them into English.

সখী গৃহে বৃন্দ সের করিয়া উবার ।
 বস্ত্রমে কুন্দলা আইলা কুঁড়িয়া ছুয়ার ।
 বাস বাজ করুক নাচেরে বাস আঁপি ।
 কুঁড়িয়া ছুয়ারে দেখে বাক্য চন্দ্রবুধী ।
 প্রণাম করিয়া বাক্য করয়ে জিজ্ঞাসা ।
 কোন প্রতি কাহার সঙ্গে কহ সত্য ভাষা ।
 হান্তবুধী অন্তরার জ্বরে উল্লাস ।
 কুন্দলাকে অভয়া করেন উপহাস ।
 ইলাবৃতে ঘর ঘোর প্রতিভেত ব্রহ্মণী ।
 শিকাকাল হইতে আমি আমি একাকিনী ।
 বলা বংশ স্থিতি ঘোর বাপেরা ঘোষণা ।
 সাত সত্য গৃহে বাস শিশুর সজ্জা ।
 তুমি যে কুন্দলা যদি দেখে অশ্রুসিক্তি ।
 এই স্থানে কতক দিন করি যে বসতি ।
 এতক বাক্য হইল যদি অন্তরার ভুক্তি ।
 আকাশ ভাঙ্গিয়া পড়ে কুন্দলাত মুণ্ড ।
 করে কিং মুখে বধু জিজ্ঞাসে কুন্দলা ।
 কুন্দলা হইল মুখা তুমি ব্রহ্মবৈষ্ণব ব্রতা ।
 হঠিয়া মধুর গলে একপলী ছন্দ ।
 অকস্মৎ মহল গান শ্রীকৃষ্ণ মুকুন্দ ।

We should add that here, as elsewhere, the extracts we have given from Mukunda Ram are from the scholarly edition of his works compiled from old manuscripts.

Fullara says :—

একপ সৌম্যে ছাড়িয়া তবদে
কেনে আইলা পরধাশ ।
কহ যো হুমারি কেনে একধরী
লমিকে নাহি ভরাণ ।

The goddess in disguise says:—

কি আর জিজ্ঞাসা কর । আইলাই তোমারে ঘর
বীরের বেশিতে নাহি ভুগে ।
দিয়া আপনার ধন ভুজিব বীরের মন
আজি হৈতে সম্পদের ভূখ ।
কি কথ ভুগের কথা । গঙ্গা নামে মোর সত্য
স্বামী যার ধরয়ে নগ্নকে ।
বরক গরল ঝরে আমো পানে নাহি চার
জ্বল জ্বলিছে সেই শোকে ।
গঙ্গা বড় সোহাগলী সদাই পাড়য়ে থাকে
স্বামীর সোহাগ ধরয়ে ।
দেখিয়া পতির ভোদ উল্লি পনম বোনে
নাহে জলাঞ্জলি কিছু তাপে ।
মণ্ডিতের স্বপ্নান সেই মোর স্বপ্নমান
অস্তিমানে নাহি দেলি আশি ।
দেখিয়া বাক্য সত্য বিবাহ মিছেম পিতা
পিছুকুণে হইলাম বিমুখী ।
ধিরকন্ঠ মোর স্বামী সহিতে না পারি আশি
লকমুখে বের গালাগালি ।
বিধি কৈল অবলা তাহে দড়ীনের জালা
পরিভাগে হইয়া গেণু কালী ।

Poor Fullara, when she finds all her entreaties and tears are of no avail, leaves the hut and goes to meet her husband in the agony of her heart. She returns

উগ্র আহাৰ পতি হৈলাম অবলা পতি
 পাঁচ মুখে পানি পাড়ে কোণে ।
 একে নতিনেব আস। কত সহ্যে জনক।
 লাগে কল্যাণলি কিছু তাপে ।
 দারুণ দৈবের পতি দরিদ্র আমার পতি
 পঞ্চ মুখে পানি পাড়ে কোণে ।
 নিমকঠ মেরে স্বামী সহিতে না পারি আমি
 তহু গুয়াইন সেই তাপে ।
 পাণ্ড পর যত দুখি সকল যোগ্যব আমি
 আমারে ত না বান্ধি ছীন ।
 স্নানকালে স্নানভাণে থাকিব বীরের আগণে
 আমি হৈতে সম্পদের চীন ।
 পতেক বাজার ধন অক্কে মেরি আভরণ
 ভুগম কিনিতে পারি ধনে ।
 সম্পদ বিস্তার দিন কেবল ভকতি দিব
 শ্রীকবি কল্পে কল তাপে ।

Fullara says :—

তোরে আমি বলি ভাল স্বামীর বসতি দে
 পরিণামে পাবে বড় দুখ ।
 গুন হের মৃত্যু মতি যদি ছাড় নিল পতি
 কেবতে করিলে সোক দুখ ॥
 স্বামী বনিতার পতি স্বামী বনিতার পতি
 স্বামী বনিতার বিধাত ।
 স্বামীই পরম ধন স্বামী বিনে অক্ষয়
 কেহ নহে হুণ মোক বাক্য ॥

with Kalaketu who is equally struck at the remarkable beauty of the fair visitant, but politely rebukes her for coming alone into his house. Chandi makes no reply, on which Kalaketu, with his accustomed boorishness, wants to send her out somewhat unceremoniously, and even takes to his bow and arrows. But lo ! his strength fails him, and he stands like a pictured warrior, unable to shoot. Chandi then discovers herself, and to make a long story short, points out the spot where gold and treasures are buried, and Kalaketu becomes a rich man. By order of Chandi he hews down a forest, and founds a new town dedicated to the goddess.

In his account of the founding of the new town the poet gives us a graphic picture of the manners of the times in which the work was written. The way in which raiyats were induced to settle in a new village, the rights and immunities promised to them, the loan of cattle and grain and money given them, the different customs of the people of different faiths and castes,—Muhammadans, Brahmans, Vaidyas, Kayasthas, Goalas, Tellis, Kamars, Kumars, &c,—all this has been depicted with a fidelity and photographic minuteness unequalled in the whole range of Bengali literature.

Among the men who come to dwell in the new town, Gujrat, is one Bharu Datta an astute Kayastha and an impudent impostor. The poet has displayed a remarkable power in delineating this character. His vanity is unbounded, and the coolest impudence supplies the place of real worth. We subjoin a passage in which

Bharu Datta at his first meeting with Kalaketu gives a boastful account of himself. There is a vein of the richest humour pervading the passage.*

* তেঁটে মগা কাঁচকলা পশ্চাতে তাঁড়ুর শালা
 আঁকু তাঁড়ু গহ্বের পরান ।
 চৌটি কাটা মহা বস্ত্র ছিঁড়া জোড়া কোঁচা লম্ব
 একবে কলম বরখান ॥
 এখান করিষা বীরে তাঁড়ু নিবেদন করে
 লম্বক পাতায়া বুড়ী বুড়া ।
 ছিঁড়া কষলে বানি বুথে মল মল হানি
 খন খন দেখে বাঁজ নাড়া ॥
 আইজান্ বড়ই জালে বনিত্তে ভোমার দেশে
 আগে ডাকিবে তাঁড়ু নড়ে ।
 যতেক কারু দেব তাঁড়ুর পশ্চাতে লেগ
 কুলে শীলে বিচারে মহাবে ।
 কহি যে আপন তব আমি বস্ত্র বাণীর বস্ত
 তিন কুলে আমার মিলন ।
 ঘোষ বহুর কল্লা ছুই আমি মোর ধস্তা
 নিজে কৈলু কল্লা স্বর্ণর্ণ ॥
 পঙ্গরি চুকুল কাহে যতেক কারু আছে
 মোর ঘরে করয়ে জোজন ।
 গট বস্ত্র অলঙ্কার দিয়া করি ব্যবহার
 কেহ নাহি করয়ে বন্দন ।
 বহু পরিবার মেগা ছুই নারী চারি জালা
 চারি পুত্র বহিনী শান্তনী ।
 ছয় ভাইনাই ছয় চেড়ী এই হেতু সাত বাড়ী
 দাক্ত দিবা না লইবে বাড়ী ॥
 দাক্ত বলদ হিবে বুড়া নিবে যে বিদ্বদ পুড়া
 জানা পাইতে টেকি কুলা হিবে ॥
 আদি পাত ভূমি রাজা ইহা জানি কেন পুজা
 অরণ্যে তাঁড়ু লে জানিবে ॥

The late hunter is no good judge of character ; he takes Bharu Datta at his word, and honors him and entrusts him with power. Such men when invested with power invariably turn oppressive, and Bharu Datta is no exception to the rule. The people loudly murmur, and Kalaketu finds out his mistake and turns Bharu out of his office. With his usual effrontery and cunning, Bharu goes over to the King of Kalinga, arouses his jealousy at the sudden greatness of Kalaketu, and brings about a war between the two kings. Kalaketu is beaten and confined, but Chandi will not desert her follower. She appears in a vision to the King of Kalinga ; and the next morning Kalaketu is released and sent to his own country, and Bharu Datta is disgraced.

The story of Srimanta Sadagar, which forms the subject of the second poem of Mukunda Ram, is so well known to most of our readers that a brief account of it will suffice. Dhanapati, a *Gandha Banik* by caste and trader by profession, exhibits his pigeons to the king one day, and it so happens that one of the pigeons flies off and drops where Knullana a girl of twelve is playing. Dhanapati goes to her and demands her pigeon, and is at the same time pleased with the amiable

ভাঁড়ুর বচন শুনি

মহাবীর মনে পড়ি

ভাঁড়ুরে করিল বহু বান ।

দানিয়ারা মগরবাসী

মহাবীরে অভিপ্রায়ী

* ঐকরি কঙ্কন হন প্রদান ।

face and demeanour of the young girl. His wife is a cousin of Khullana, and as merry repartees are allowed between such relatives, Khullana replies to him merrily and wittily. Proposals follow, and Khullana's father consents to the match. But his wife Rasbhakati naturally hesitates to give her only girl to a man who has already a wife, and administers a sound curtain lecture to her mate, spiced with such mild epithets as "গড় ভদ্র হইল গড়", with which many a careful house-wife in modern as well as in ancient times has expressed her kind regards for her husband. The bridegroom Dhanapati too has the benefit of a similar lecture from his wife Lahana, cousin of Khullana, for wishing to marry again at this mature age; but a kind word turneth away wrath, and Dhanapati knows the truth of the saying. He accosts Lahana in the politest of terms, says that the new bride is only to relieve Lahana of her menial work, and gives her gold for ornaments which have always a magic effect in comforting and composing the female mind. The marriage follows, but the happy pair are not allowed to taste its sweets. The king wishes to have a golden cage for a pet bird, and Dhanapati is ordered to go to Eastern Bengal where such articles were manufactured. Dhanapati leaves his village in the District of Burdwan, leaving his new wife Khullana to the tender mercies of her fellow-wife Lahana.

For some time the two wives live in peace, but as often happens in Hindu families, a female servant fomented their jealousies and arouses their hatred towards

each other. Durbala, a character very powerfully drawn, repairs to the elder wife Lahana, discourses on the beauty of Khullana, and impresses on Lahana that Dhanapati will neglect her on his return. Such insinuations arouse Lahana's jealousy, and after some subterfuges she has a letter forged, purporting to come from Dhanapati, and directing that Khullana should be employed in tending goats. Khullana is no patient Griselda, for Mukunda Ram never paints characters with superhuman virtues or vices. Khullana, though the heroine of the poem, is like any ordinary woman of flesh and blood, and it is no part of the poet's scheme to represent her as possessed of extraordinary patience or virtue. She falls out with her fellow-wife, and even returns her taunts and blows.

Khullana however succumbs at last, and consents to take out her husband's goats every day to the fields to graze. With a heavy heart and bitter tears she goes through this unaccustomed and humiliating task, and the account of her long sufferings and sorrows and of her wanderings in fields and jungles, her soliloquies and addresses to birds, her sleep and her dream of her mother,—these are among the most affecting passages in the work.*

* We make a few extracts here.

ধুলব। ছাখিল রাখে পাশ কৌণ নগে।
 অগ্নি নব অঙ্গ পোড়ে রবির অকাল।
 আদর্শে পুণ্ডিত মহী নব মেঘের তল।
 ছেলি চরাইতে রাম। নাহি পায় হল।

Chandi at last comes to the rescue of Khullana. She appears to Lahana in a vision and upbraids her, and Lahana repents, embraces Khullana as her sister, and

জীবনে বরিষে ঘেদ দিবল রজনী ।
 ছায়ায় চরিতে স্থল না পাই অগ্নী ॥
 শরের আড়াতে রান্না চরায়েন ছাগি ।
 কোলে করি নানা পাত করে চুখভাগী ॥
 জানয়ে চরায় ছেলি ভিজিলে দধি মা ।
 অকুণ্ঠিত সন্ধিতে পীকুই হইল বা ॥
 আনন্দের জলবুটি ঘেন বাজে দেল ।
 দিন তিন চোহিলে মহনা না দেয় তেল ॥
 ভাষে সুখে পূমনা শরৎকালে জাহে ।
 আঁধারে আঁধারেন এতু অধিকা উৎসবে ॥
 নিঃকতনে প্রাণনাথ কৈল বনবাস ।
 কাঙ্ক্ষিত মাল আইল হিমের প্রকাশ ॥
 কুবার শীতল বহু হিম চাপি মাস ।
 বৃন্দাবন শীত থণ্ডে রবির প্রকাশ ॥
 আইল বনস্থ পুরু প্রচণ্ড তপন ।
 অশোক কিংকর কুটে পলাশ কাঁকন ॥
 নখরিয়া প্রজাপন শুকায় তেহ বনে ।
 অপরাধ কৈলে নোক করে অপমনে ॥

It was for a *Suk* bird that her husband went to East Bengal to procure a golden cage, and Khullana bursts forth into an exclamation of grief on seeing a pair of *Suk* birds on the tree :—

সাগরী কুয়া কুমি দিলে এতেক বাঁতনা ।
 আসি রাজা বিদ্যাবান পিঞ্জরে সোধিতে মান
 অনাখিনী করিলে খুন্না ॥
 খোড় বেলা প্রাণনাথ ছেলি রাখি থাই ভাত
 পরিতে না দিলে পরিধান ।
 দ্বিতীয়া বরষ তাকে কেবল তোমার পায়ে
 খুন্নাও এত অপমান ॥

relieves her of her humiliating work. Soon after Dhana-pati, who like an easy-going, pleasure-loving man was leading a life of pleasure in Eastern Bengal, returns to his country with the golden cage, and who is so happy

আনার বধিতে প্রাণ আল কিবা এই স্থান
 পিঙ্গবের বিলম্ব দেখিয়া ।
 তের আহ্নি শারী প্রক দুচাহ মনের দুখ
 খেঁড়ে বারতা দেখে গিয়া ।
 শিখিয়া ব্যাধের কলা কহে বরিসোভনমা
 কাননে এড়িও আলি ফালে ।
 তোরহারে বরিয়া প্রক দুচাহ মনের দুখ
 একাকিনী সারী বেনে ভালে ॥
 শারীর খাইয়া মাখা দেখে মের দুঃখ বাধা
 তোমাকে লাগিয়ে মের বধ ।
 কর কর্মে অবধান হারহু আমার প্রাণ
 যাও তুমি খেঁড়ে জনপদ ॥
 আনিয়া করিয়া দয়া দুঃখের বারতা লয়া
 কেহ মের শারীর বারতা ।
 উড়ে গেল সারী প্রক যখনা ভাবয়ে দুখ
 মূর্ছন বচিল গীত পাখা ॥

Khullana makes a similar exclamation on seeing some bees collecting honey from flowers :—

অমরী জ্বর তোরে যুক্তি কর
 না পাও মধুর গীত ।
 তোর মধুর রসে কাম মরে তার
 চিত্ত তৈল চমকিত ॥
 সঙ্গে তোরে বধু পান কর মধু
 কি কথ দুখের গর ।
 অনাধী দেখিয়া তোর নাহি নরা
 চিত্ত তৈল মের চোর ॥

as the young and beauteous Khullana, the darling of her husband?

তোরে সঙ্গে অলিনী নিবাস বসিনী
 মল্লিকার বিরহ বাধা ।
 চিত্ত চমকিত যদি পাও গীত
 পাও জননী মধে ॥
 মল্লিকার বিপদে পাল কৈলি পদে
 দিনয়ে রাত্রে হরি ।
 করিলু বিনয় না হৈলে সদয়
 কিসের বিনয় ভক্তি ॥
 কুলে মাতোয়ারা মোর হৈলি কাল
 না জন বিনয় বাণী ।
 পুত্রার তুলে কত মধু পিলে
 তাহা মনে আমি গণি ॥
 ছাড়িয়া ছুগর চলে হটপদ
 কোকিল হুনার পুরে ।
 বিনয় অর্জন করে বুলনা
 কর যোড় করি শিরে ॥
 রাজা বদ্বাদ জগৎ অবকাত
 বসিক মাকে জগন ।
 জ্ঞান পত্নারদ রচি চাক পদ
 ঐকবি কল্পণ গান ।'

Khullana's address to the Kokil also deserves to be quoted :—

কোকিল হে কত কাক ফুলগিত রা ।
 মধুরে বিধানি নিভা উগার বিহি
 বিনয়ী জনের গোড়ে গা ॥
 মল্লিক কাননে বাস হবে বহু বার হাস
 কামের প্রথমে সেবা পতি ।
 কে ভোমারে বলে ভাল ভিতরে বাহিরে কাল
 বধ কৈলে অন্যথা হুতী ॥

We shall not dwell on the joy of the young wife on the return of her husband ; nor on the schemes of Durbala who, true to her character, goes first to congratulate Khullana with “আর শুনেছ ছেঁটি মা নাধু আইল ঘরে” &c., and then to Lahana to foment her anger and jealousy with “আর শুনেছ বড় মা লতার চণ্ডিত” &c. Then follows a graphic account of Durbala's bringing things from the market and the young wife cooks them with skill of a *chêf de cuisine* to please her husband. Lahana attempts to conceal her cruelty towards Khullana by many specious excuses,

আর ঘনি কাড় মাও মহনের মাথা খাও
 বলঘের লাভক দোহাই ।
 তোর রব খতবর জল কৈল জ্বা জ্বা
 অনাখীরে তোর বকা নাই ॥
 প্রতি অভ্যুদয়ে পাও না দিনসি বাগ মাও
 কাল লাগ কালিয়া বরণ ।
 সদাধর কাছে যথা কেন নাহি ছাড় তথা
 এই বলে ডাক অকারণ ॥
 আগিয়া বসন্ত কালে বদিয়া রদাল কায়ে
 প্রতি দিন দেখসি যতথা ।
 হেন জয় মোর মনে আসি কিবা এই হানে
 নিকলনী হইল লহনা ॥
 পাও আছে নানা ফল উথরহু হুলহুল
 ঘেৰো বধ করহু কি রীতি ।
 বায়ল তোমাণে গোথে পাণে সহযোগে বেগে
 অনাখীরে কথ বেহু বতি ॥
 পিক বায় জনা ধন খুলনা অস্থির মন
 - চলে রামা অণর কানন ।
 হঠিয়া ত্রিগণী ছল পাচলী করিল বন্ধ
 *জোবস্তী শিকদি কখন ॥

and vainly tries to dissuade Khullana from going to her lord. Needless it is to dwell on the raptures of the meeting between Dhanapati and Khullana who appears in superb dress and beauty, recounts her sufferings, but forgets them all in the embraces of her lord.

But there is no rest for the merchant. The king is in want of some spices, and Dhanapati must again leave his home and his young wife, then with child, and sail to Ceylon for the spices. Going down the Ajay river, the vessel comes to the modern Hugli River, and successively passes by Nabadwip, Santipur, Tribeni, and then comes into the boisterous Megna. There a storm arises and destroys most of the boats. The merchant then comes into the land of the Firingis (Portuguese) whom the poet has described in very uncomplimentary language. After this the merchant must come out into the open sea, and the poet's notions of geography become somewhat hazy, for he makes his hero pass first through a sea of prawns and lobsters, then through a sea of crabs, then through one of snakes, then of alligators, then of cowries, then of conches ! Any how the merchant at last manages to come to Setubandha and thence to Ceylon. In the adjacent seas Dhanapati sees, through the deception of Chandi, a marvellous sight, *viz.*, that of a damsel of superb beauty sitting on a lotus and swallowing an elephant ! He narrates this story to the King of Ceylon who takes him to be a liar and an impostor and imprisons him, and so ends his adventure.

At Ujjaini, Khullana has a son whom she names Sripati or Srīmanṭa. In course of time the infant grows

up to a boy, and with other boys goes to the village Patsbala. One day, the guru gets angry with Srimanta, and taunts him in very vulgar terms in reference to the absence of his father. The boy returns home, and though of tender years, resolves on going in quest of his father. All persuasion is vain, the boy has the determination of a man, and he has made up his mind.

Poor Khusilana has not the heart to let her son go to that distant region from whose bourse his father had not returned; but Chundi comes down, consoles the distressed mother, and promises to take special care of the son. Srimanta Sadagar sets sail, and in due time reaches Ceylon after witnessing the strange damsel on the lotus whom his father had seen. He repeats the story to the King of Ceylon who orders him to be executed for telling a lie. Poor Srimanta is led to the place of execution, but still remains unaltered in his faith towards Chandi, whom he addresses in the thirty-four consonants of the Bengali alphabet,—an address which Bharat Chandra has imitated in his Bidya Sundar. The goddess descends in the shape of an old Brahman woman, and ultimately rescues Srimanta after beating back the whole force of the king. The king at last discovers Chandi and worships her, honors her protegee Srimanta, and promises to bestow his daughter Susila on him. But Srimanta is disconsolate, and will not marry till he sees his father. At his request the king releases all the prisoners, and they are one by one provided with money and things and sent home. The heart of the child throbs at the sight of his father whom he has never seen before, and the old man

gives a true account of himself to the young Srimanta, little knowing that it is his own son he is speaking to. Srimanta still remains incognito, and hands over the last will and testament which his father had left with Khullana before leaving home. Affecting is the passage in which the old man, on seeing the letter, suddenly recollects his distant home and cries out in bitter grief. The son discovers himself, and they both return home to the bosom of their family.

Such are the plots of Mukunda Ram's poems ; with regard to the merits of his poetry we have said much already. Its most remarkable feature is its intense reality. Many of the incidents are superhuman and miraculous, but the thoughts and feelings and sayings of his men and women are perfectly natural, recorded with a fidelity which has no parallel in the whole range of Bengali literature.

The characters of Mukunda Ram, too, are not princes and princesses, but men and women in the ordinary ranks of life, a hunter of low caste and his wife, a trader and his two wives. The poet has no ordinary powers of character-painting. All the pictures he has drawn are from life ; and often, without almost intending it, he hits off in a few lines a character, clear and distinguishable from all others. Kalaketu is a boorish, strong, brave and simple-minded hunter, Fullara a poor dutiful wife, Murari Sil an astute shop-keeper, Bharu Datta an impudent and pretending impostor, Dhanapati an ease-loving, easy-going, elderly, well-to-do trader, Lahana and Khullana are rival wives, with all

the faults and angry passions of rival wives, and Durbala is a scheming old servant, with all the mischievousness and self-importance of old servants in Hindu households.

Pathos is a strong point in Mukunda Ram's writings. A sufferer himself, he has a ready sympathy for all sufferers; and poor Fullam and poor Khullana are not ordinary sufferers. Mukunda Ram's language is flowing, perspicuous and musical, and a quiet humour pervades his poetry.



CHAPTER XI

RAM PRASAD AND HIS SONGS.

Eighteenth century.

It is possible to be a true poet without being a great poet, and Ram Prasad Sen is a true poet, every inch of him. In his life and acts, no less than in his songs, the poet predominates over the man.

Raja Krishna Chandra Rai of Nadiya will always figure in the annals of Bengali literature as a liberal and enlightened patron of learning. The court of Krishna Chandra was an assemblage of poets and learned Brahmans. Of these, two have left their names and works to posterity. Ram Prasad Sen and Bharat Chandra Rai are the two great poets of the eighteenth century.

Ram Prasad Sen, a Vaidya by caste, was born in Kumarbhatta in Halisabar in the district of Nadiya, probably about 1720. He was the son of Ram Ram Sen, and the grandson of Rameswara Sen; and he had a son named Ram Dulal, and a daughter named Jagadishwari.

In early life he went to Calcutta as a Sarkar or agent of a well-to-do citizen; but like Frank Osbaldismore, he filled his ledger books with poetry, and composed songs when he should have cast up accounts. The Head Sarkar took offence at this gross breach of all rules and precedents, and took the trembling young poet and his account books to his master.

The latter, however, very unlike the elder Mr. Osbaldistone, appreciated the talent of the young novice; and what was the surprise of the old Sarkar when the master, instead of reproving the bad accountant, admired the true poet, and sent him back to his native village on a pension of 30 Rupees per mensem. It is seldom that men of business appreciate talent so quickly or honor genius so handsomely. We transcribe the song which is said to have specially charmed the young accountant's master. It is a song addressed to the goddess Kali, and clothed in metaphor, as Ram Prasad's songs generally are.*

Ram Prasad, once more in his native village, gave full vent to his talent for songs. He had no work to do, no cares and anxieties to disturb his peace. Life for him was as a sweet poem,—one sweet song full of pathos and feeling. He was a Tantrika a devout worshipper of Kali, and he was careless of this world, and

* অমোহ হাত মা কলিকারী ।

আমি নেমক হারাম নই শঙ্করি ।

শব রক্ত জাখার লবাই লুটে ইহা আবি লক্ষিত মারি ।

জীভার জিহ্বা আছে যার সে বে ভোলা ত্রিপুরারি ।

শিব আশ্রয়ণ পতাব দাতা তবু জিহ্বা রাখ ভারি ।

অর্ধ অন্ন জামগীর তবু শিষের মাইল্য ভারি ।

আবি বিনা মাইনের ঢাকের কেবল চরণ ধ্বজে অধিকারী

যদি ভোমার বাপের ধারা ধর তবে বটে আনি হারি ।

যদি আমার বাপের ধারা ধর তবেত মা পেতে পারি ।

প্রদানকালে এমন পদের বামাই লয়ে আনি নরি ।

ও পদের মন্ত পদ পাইতো সে পদ লয়ে বিপদ মারি ।

lived in his faith in Kali. Kali or Sakti, Durga or Chandi, is not an unapproachable deity; she is the ideal of a Hindu mother, tender and loving beyond expression, ministering to every want and helpful in every difficulty. In her illimitable love she must put up even with the reproaches of her wayward sons; and the songs to Kali are oftener complaints of her cruelty than thanksgivings for her mercy. Most of the songs of Ram Prasad relate to Kali, and it is impossible to convey to the English reader any thing of the pathos and the tenderness with which the poet appeals to his deity, or rather the child appeals to his mother. In this consists the beauty, the simplicity, the sweetness of Ram Prasad's songs, a sweetness so overpowering, that even to the present day the listener is affected by them as the very beggars of our towns sing the strains of Ram Prasad from street to street.

The fame of Ram Prasad Sen spread from day to day, till at last Raja Krishna Chandra Rai of Nadiya heard of him, and welcomed him, and listened to his songs. To know the poet was to admire him, to know the man was to like him, and Ram Prasad soon rose in the Raja's favour. He rewarded him with the title of Kabiranjan, and with the more substantial gift of a 100 bigahs of rent-free land. In return, Ram Prasad wrote a poem on the well-known story of Bidya Sundar, and dedicated it to the Raja. We must admit, this work is disappointing to the reader. It was not in Ram Prasad's line to write long narrative poems, and his attempt was a failure. Probably too his anxiety to make the present commensurate

with the kindness of the Raja hampered him in his composition. We may therefore dismiss this subject with the remark, that the *Bidyā Sundar* of Ram Prasad is generally stiff and artificial, but shews a thorough mastery of an alliterative though somewhat artificial style.*

Several stories are told about Ram Prasad. It is said he went to Murshidabad with Raja Krishna Chandra, and sang to the Raja in a boat on the Hugli. The boat of Nawab Surajuddawla passed that way, and the Subahdar was pleased with Ram Prasad's songs, got him into his own boat, and commanded him to sing. Ram Prasad sang in Hindi, but the Subahdar would have none of it, and ordered Ram Prasad to sing the same songs he had sung just before. The poet did so, and it is said, the Subahdar was charmed with the performance.

* *Bidyā's lament on the apprehension of Sundar.*

কোন ধর্ম ছেদ করি গেছে ধর্মি পাল তর্ক
 দিয়া দিব পালক্য করণে ।
 জনহেন এই বেশ গায়ে বেশ কৃপা বেশ
 কর ভাই অকাল মরণে ।

The Queen's lament on the detection of her daughter's frailty.

নহে হৃদয় অশ্রুদী নিরপি বলি নীহে ।
 অসম্বর অস্বর অগর পড়ে শিরে ।

The Queen's address to the King.

শিরে ছানি পানি রাখি বলে কর কি ।
 স্তন পর্কু ঘর ঘর গর্ভবতী স্বী ।

A curious story is told of Ram Prasad's death. On the last day of the Kali Puja, when the Hugli was covered with boats carrying the images of Kali, Ram Prasad became unusually excited. He sang of Kali till, by one account, he jumped from his boat into the river and was drowned, or by another account, he fell down in a swoon and died.

We quote below a few of the most popular songs of Ram Prasad.*

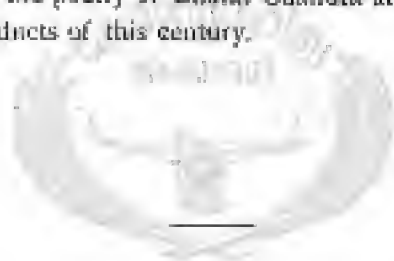
* মন কুহিকাঙ্গ হোর এসে না ।
 এমন যেনব জনম রইলো পড়ে আঁখিব করলে ফলত দেখা ।
 কালী নামের হাওরে বেড়া ফুলে তরুণ হবে না ।
 সে যে শত্রু বেড়া দুঃকেশী তার কাছেতো যম গেলে না ।
 অন্য অঙ্গ শতান্তে বা বাজাঙুরেই আঁখি না ।
 এখন আপন হেবে যত্ন কর চুটিয়ে কল কটে নেনা ।
 জ্বর বোপন করেছেন বীজ তার তজ্জি-বারি সেচে নেনা ।
 গুরে একলা হুঁই না ছেড়ে পারিস রামপ্রসাদকে ভেঁকে নেনা ॥

নিভান্ত বাবে দিন এদিন বাবে কেবল ঘোষণা রবে গো ।
 তার নামে অসম্মান কলঙ্ক হবে গো ।
 এসেছিলান ভবের হাটে হুঁই করে মনেছি যাটে
 ওমা ঈশ্বরী চলিল পাটে নায়ে লবে গো ।
 মনের ভরে ভরা নায় দুঃখী জনে ফেলে যার ।
 এমা তার হুঁই যে কড়ি চার সে কোথা পারবে গো ।
 প্রণাম বলে পাবাণ মেয়ে আশান দে মা ফিরে চেয়ে ।
 আনি জাননে বিলাস স্তম্ভ গেয়ে স্তম্ভার্যে গো ॥

মা আমায় পুরাণি কত ।
 কলুস চোক ঢাকা বলধের মত ।
 বেঁধে বিধে ভবের পাঁছে না শাক বিতেজ অবিরত ।
 একবার বুলে দে মা চোকের ঠুনি হেরি তোঝ ঐ অভয় পদ ॥

One great charm of his poetry consists in the simple homely similes, always drawn from familiar objects of lowly village life. The cultivated rice-field, the ferry boat, the village market, the oil-mill, such are the objects of his similes, round which he entwines his feeling songs with the most touching effect.

The eighteenth century produced many other poets in Bengal, and Ghanaram's voluminous work, written early in the century, has recently been published. But Ghanaram and other poets like him are little known to the reading public of Bengal. The songs of Ram Prasad and the poetry of Bharat Chandra are the greatest literary products of this century.



CHAPTER XII.

BHARAT CHANDRA RAI.

Eighteenth century.

CONTEMPORANEOUSLY with Kam Prasad Sen, and equally favoured by Raja Krishna Chandra Rai, lived a more skilful poet, the talented Bharat Chandra Rai,—a “mine of talent” or *Ganabur*,—as the Raja called him.

Bharat Chandra Rai was the fourth son of Raja Narendra Narain Rai, a Zemindar of Burdwan. The seat of his zemindari was at Pandua in the Pargana of Bhursut, and his residence was surrounded on all sides by a moat, traces of which are visible to the present day. Narendra Narain had disputes with Kirti Chandra Rai, Raja of Burdwan, and made insulting allusions with reference to Kirti Chandra's mother. The queen mother was incensed, and sent an army which attacked and took the forts of Bhabanipur and Pandua, and desolated the states of Narendra Narain. Narendra Narain was reduced to penury, and his young son Bharat Chandra fled for shelter to the house of his maternal uncle at Nawapara, near Gazipur, in the Pargana of Mandalghat. There he studied grammar and dictionary, and at the age of fourteen returned to his native village, and married a girl of the village Sarada. The match was considered dishonorable, and Bharat Chandra's elder brothers reproved him for it. The future poet left his home in disgust, and

took shelter with one Ram Chandra Munshi, a Kayastha inhabitant of Debanandpur near Bansbaria in the district of Hugli, and there commenced the study of Persian.

The first poems that Bharat Chandra published to the world were composed under curious circumstances. Bharat Chandra was asked to read hymns to Satya Narain on a certain occasion by the people with whom he lived. The festive day came, and how great was the surprise of the people when, instead of reading the verses usually read on such occasions, he read out *tripadi* verses specially composed by him for the occasion. How much greater was their astonishment when on being asked to chant verses again a few days after on a similar occasion, he read out a new set of *chaupadi* verses which he had composed afresh on the same subject. The poet was then only fifteen.

At the age of twenty Bharat returned home, and as he was well versed in the Persian language, he went over to the court of the Raja of Burdwan, as a Muktear or agent for his brothers for their joint estate.

Bharat's brothers however failed to remit rent in due time, and the Raja, actuated probably by his old grudge against the family, confiscated the estate and took it over as his *Amir* lands. Bharat was imprudent enough to protest, and he was imprisoned. Poor Bharat Chandra was now in utter misery, but he did not lose heart. He bribed the jailor and escaped, and at once fled to Cuttack, where he lived under patronage of Siva Bhatta the Mahratta Subahdar of the place. Cuttack,

as our readers know, has always been a great stronghold of the Vaishnavas, and in their company Bharat turned a Vaishnava and assumed the dress and demeanour of the sect. Shortly after, while on his journey to Brindaban, he was surprised by some of his distant relatives at Khanakul Krishnagar. As rigid Hindus, they were shocked at the conversion of the poet. They prevented him from going to Brindaban, and after much persuasion made him forsake his Vaishnava dress, and Bharat was a Hindu householder once more. The readers of *Ananda Mangal* know that in describing the double conversion of Vyasa, who first became a Vaishnava and then a Sakta or Saiva, the poet has partly explained and partly apologized for his own conduct.

After a short residence at his father-in-law's house at Sarada, Bharat Chandra went over to Chandranagar, where Indra Narain Pal Chaudhuri, Dewan of the French Government, received him with honor. This Pal Chaudhuri was a friend of Raja Krishna Chandra of Nadiya, and used to lend him money. On one occasion, when Raja Krishna Chandra came to Chandranagar, Indra Narain introduced the poet to him. The Raja was pleased with the young poet, took him over to Krishnagar, and appointed him as a Pandit of his court on a monthly pay of 40 Rs. He was pleased with the short pieces which the poet now and then composed, and asked him to compose a long poem, *Ananda Mangal*, after the style of Mukunda Ravi's *Chandi*. Bharat composed the poem, and a Brahman of the name of Nilmani Samadar set it to music, and sang it

before the Raja in parts as it was composed. At the request of the Raja the tale of *Bidyā Sundar* was subsequently embodied in the work. Krishna Chandra was so pleased with the poet that he made him a grant of 100 Rs. to enable him to build a house at Mulajor which village he leased to the poet on a rent of Rs. 600 per annum.

Shortly afterwards, an incursion of the Maharrattas compelled Raja Tilak Chandra Rai of Bardwan to flee with his mother to Kangachi near Mulajor, and they took *pattai* lease of the village from the Raja of Krishnagar in the name of a servant Ram Deb Nag. This Nag proved to be an oppressive Patnidar, and Bharat Chandra took a poet's revenge in a set of Sanskrit verses entitled the "Nagashtaka" or the eight verses on Nag. The Raja was so pleased with this performance that he made over to Bharat Chandra 16 Bighas at Mulajor and 150 Bighas at Ghusti *rent-free*, intending that Bharat should remove to the latter place if he chose. But Bharat's co-villagers would not allow him to leave, and Bharat continued to live at Mulajor. Bharat died at the age of 48, in the year 1760.

Critics have formed very different estimates of Bharat Chandra's poetical powers. Many of our countrymen of the old school would place him in the highest rank of poets, but we are unable to share this opinion. Bharat Chandra with all his gifts is but an imitator of Mukunda Rani, and we confess that Bharat Chandra's artificial and polished strains strike us as lifeless, when compared with the simple and faithful pictures from nature, with

which Mukunda Ram's works are replete. Mukunda Ram draws from nature, Bharat Chandra daubs his pictures with gorgeous colours. Bharat Chandra is the more polished and artificial poet, Mukunda Ram is the truer painter and the greater poet.

That Bharat Chandra has his beauties, none will deny. His three works *Ananda Mangal*, *Bidyā Sundar*, and *Maminda* form one continuous story, and are in reality but one work. Like Mukunda Ram, Bharat Chandra intends to glorify the name and deeds of the goddess Uma or Chandī, and instead of narrating the story of an imaginary hero, he has taken up the story of the life of Bhabanand Mazumdar, the renowned ancestor of his patron and benefactor, Raja Krishna Chandra Rai of Nadiya. The poet begins with an account of the birth of Uma, the great feast given by Daksha to which Siva was not invited, the self-immolation of Uma in consequence, her second birth as daughter of the Himalayas, her marriage with Siva, and other mythological stories with which every Hindu is familiar. The poet's rare power of graceful versification enables him to tell these stories with effect, the reader peruses page after page with the same sense of pleasure, and at times he is struck with passages in which the poet shews a keen sense of humour. Such, for instance, is the description of Siva's marriage, and such again is the account of his disputes with his young wife. We need scarcely remind our readers, however, that in all these descriptions Bharat is a close imitator of Mukunda Ram.

We need not stop to narrate how the great poet and saint, Vyasa, quarrelled with Siva, and made an abortive attempt to build up a new Benares to rival the town of Benares where Siva is worshipped by all. We pass over all this, and at last find Uma on her way to the house of Bhabanand Mazumdar. She has to cross a stream, and the account she gives of herself to the ferryman is justly regarded as remarkable specimen of artistic poetry. The whole passage* may be interpreted in two different ways, and while the ferryman understands her to be the neglected wife of a Kulin Brahman

- * ইংরাজের পরিচয় করেন বিশ্বাসী ।
 বুঝে বিশ্বাসী আমি পরিচয় করি ।
 বিশেষণে বিশেষণে কহিবারে পারি ।
 জানিছ আপনি নাহি নাহি করে নারী ।
 ঘোড়ের প্রধান শিক্তা দুপ বংশজতে ।
 পরস কুলীন আমি বলাবান্ধু পাত ।
 পিতামহ মিনা ঘোরে অন্নপূর্ণা নাহ ।
 মকলের পতি কেই পরিচয় বাস ।
 অতিবদ্ধ বুদ্ধপতি মিজিতে নিপুণ ।
 কোন গুণ নাহি তার কপালে আকুল ।
 কু কথায় পঞ্চরূপ কঠিনতা বিহ ।
 কেবল আমার সঙ্গে দল অহনিশ ।
 গঙ্গানামে সত্য তার তরঙ্গ এসনি ।
 জীবন যত্নগা সে আমার শিরোমণি ।
 কুত নাড়াইয়া পতি ঘেঁরে ঘরে ঘরে ।
 না করে পোষাণ বাপ কিল ছেন বধে ।
 - অভিমানে সমুদ্রেতে ঝাঁপ দিয়া কাঁই ।
 ছেঁদোরে আপনা ভাবে তার করে ঘাই ।

who has many other wives, the goddess obscurely gives a true account of herself. Our readers will perceive that this passage is only an imitation of a similar ingenious passage in Mukunda Ram's work ; but we confess the imitation is superior to the original both in grace and in art, for Bharat is superior to Mukunda Ram in art. Uma at last reaches the house of Bhabanand Mazumdar, and from that day the house rises in glory and importance. Pratap Aditya Rai, a refractory Zemindar of Jessore-Iswaripur, defies the power of the Emperor Aurungzeb, and the renowned Man Sinha is sent to quell the chief. That warrior finds some difficulty in carrying his forces over the swamps and marshes of Southern Bengal, and Bhabanand renders him signal assistance. At last a battle is fought of which we have a spirited though somewhat grotesque description, and Pratap Aditya is killed. It is when Bhabanand is accompanying Man Sinha in his marches that he narrates to the Rajput chief the story of *Bidya Sundar* ; so that that story is not a portion of the main plot in any way.

In the story of *Bidya Sundar* the poet has tried to cast a stain on the Raj family of Burdwan, and his early disputes with that family must have impelled him to the task. The German poet Heine sings :

Affront the living poets not,
With weapons and flames they are furnished,

And Bharat-Chandra has certainly revenged himself on the house of Burdwan with his direst weapons in his story of *Bidya Sundar*. The story is that of a princess of the Burdwan house, who falls in love with

a young prince from Southern India who has come to Bardwan in disguise. The young prince secures the services of an astute flower-woman whose character has been powerfully drawn by the poet,* although it is only an imitation, and not an improved one, of Mukunda Ram's Durlala.

The flower woman takes an epistle of love curiously woven by the foreign prince in a garland to the princess, and the effect which follows is described, as only Bharat Chandra can describe such subjects.†

* সুধা যায় অন্তঃখিনি আইসে মামিনী।
 হেনকালে তথা এক আইলা মালিনী ॥
 কথায় হীরার দার হীর্য তার নাম।
 দাঁত ঢোলা মাজা দোলা ধূসা অগ্নিরাম ॥
 বলিতরা গুহা গান পাতি রাগা গগে।
 কণে কড়ি করে খাঁড়ী কথা কয় জনে।
 ঢুকা ধাঁধা চুলে পরিধান সাতা শাড়ী।
 মূলের চুপড়ী ঝেকে গিরে বাড়ী বাড়ী।
 আছিল বিস্তর ঠাই প্রথম বসনে।
 এবে বুড়া তবু কিছু গুঁড়া আছে শেলে ॥
 ছিটা ফোটা বয় তব্ব আদে কত গুলি।
 চোকড়া ভুলায়ে খাও কত আদে সুনি ॥
 নাকসে পাতিয়া কীদ কলস জেজরে।
 লড়নী না থাকে কাছে কলসের দাধ ॥
 মল্ল মল্ল গতি ঘন ঘন হাত বাড়।।
 কুলিতে বৈকালে ফুল আইসে সেই পাড়।।

† শুন লো মালিনি কি তোর বীতি।
 শিকিত হুগরে না হয় বীতি।
 এঁত বেল্য হৈল পুলা না করি।
 কুবার কুলায় অগ্নিরা পরিঃ।

Other incidents follow, and the prince Sundar at last finds admission into the apartments of the languishing princess Bidya. The descriptions which follow are repugnant to modern taste, and have left

বুক বাড়িবাড়ি কার মোহায়ে।
 কালি শিবাইব নায়েব আগে ॥
 বুড়া হলি ভবু না গেল ঠাটে।
 বাড়ি হৈছে যেন বাড়ের মাট।
 হারে ছিল বুঝি বধুর ধুম।
 এতক্ষণে ওই কান্না শুম।
 দেখ দেখি চোরে কতক বেলা।
 বেরে পেরে বুঝি করিল হেলা।
 কি কবিয়ে তোরে আমার গালি।
 বাপায়ে বলিয়া শিখাব কালি।
 হীরা পর পর কঁপিয়ে ভরে।
 আর আর গুল নয়ন করে।
 কারি কহে শুন স্নানকুবাড়ি।
 কম অপরাধ আমি হোমারি।
 চিকন গাখনে বাড়িল হেলা।
 ত্রেনার কাজে কি আশার হেলা॥
 বুঝিতে নাহিলু নিশির কল।
 করিলু ভালেরে হইল মন্দ॥
 লহ বাড়িবাড়ি করিলু শ্রম।
 অস কুথা হৈল খটিল জম॥
 দিনরোতে বিদ্যা হইল ফল।
 অস্ত্র গেল কোর উদয় রস॥
 বিদ্যা কহে তেপি চিকন হার।
 এ গাধনি আই নহে তোমার॥
 পুনঃ কি যৌবন কিরি আইল।
 কিবা কোনে বধু শিখারে ছিল ॥
 হীরা কহে তিতি অঁখির নীরে।
 যৌবন প্রবন্ধ কোলে কি কিলে॥

a stain on Bharat Chandra's poetry and fame. Bidya's frailty is soon discovered, and the anger of the queen mother at her daughter's misconduct is powerfully described.* At last the young prince is detected and ordered

নহে কীৰ্ত্তি যাঁহা কুট করোহে ।
 কি দেখিলে তবু আশিক্‌সেৱা ।
 ছাড় আই বন। জালি সকল ।
 গোড়াৰ কাটিয়া মাথায় জল ॥
 বড়ৰ পিৰীতি হালিৰ বাণ ।
 ফলে হাতে হুঁড়ি অপেক্ষে টাব ॥
 কোটায় কি আছে দেখ পুনিয়া ।
 থাকিয়া কি ফল যাই চুলিয়া ।
 বিকা খোলে কোটা কল ছুটিল ।
 মৰ হেন ফুলশৰ ফুটিল ॥
 শিহৰিল বনি দেখিয়া কল ।
 হোক পড়ি আয়ো হৈল বিকল ॥
 ভগ্ন ভগ্ন তবু কলৈৰ ভবে ।
 ভাৱত হীৰায়ে জিজ্ঞাসা করে ॥

- * ক্ৰোধে রাণী ধাৰে বড়ো অকল পৰায় পড়ে
 আত্মহানী কৰয়ীৰকন ।
 চকু বুজে খেল টাক হাতনাড়া গন ডাক
 চমকে সকল পুৰজন ॥
 শব্দবগুহেতে যায় বৈকালিক নিত্ৰা যাৰ
 সহচরী চামৰ ভুলাম ।
 রাণী আইল কোণমনে নৃপুৰেৰ চকুতলে
 উঠে বৈলে বীৰসিংহ যায় ।
 রাণীৰ দেখিয়া হুল জিজ্ঞাসয়ে মহীপাল
 কেদ কেদ কহ নবিশেষ ।
 রাণী বলে মহাৰাজ কি কৰ কহিতেলাজ
 কলকে পুৱিল নব দেশ ॥

to be executed. But the goddess Kali interferes and saves the offender from his well-merited punishment, even as Mukunda Rani's Chandi saves Srimanta Sadagar when the King of Ceylon orders his execution.

Bharat Chandra's style is always rich, graceful and flowing. Nowhere perhaps in the entire range of Bengali literature do we find the language of poetry so rich, so graceful, so overpowering in artistic beauty as in *Bidyā Sundar*. He is a complete master of the art of versification, and his appropriate phrases and rich descriptions

যহে আইবড় মেয়ে কখন না দেখে চেয়ে
 বিবাহের না ভাব উপায়।
 অন্যায়সে গারে স্বধ হেথিরে নাতির মুখ
 এড়াইলে কীর বিয়া হয়।
 কি কহির হার হার জলন্ত আগুনগ্রায়
 আইবড় এত স্বদ মেয়ে।
 কেননে বিবাহ হবে লোকখণ্ড কিসে রলে
 কিনেক বেথিতে হয় চেয়ে।
 উচ্চমাথা হৈল ছোট বিদ্যার হয়েচে পেট
 কালামুখ সেগাইবে কারে।
 যেখন আছিল গরী তেমনি হইল গরী
 স্বহকারে গেলে ছায়েবারে।
 বিদ্যার কি বিবলোষ ভারে বুধা কবি রোষ
 বিয়া হৈলে ঠেত কত ছেলে।
 ফেবনে কামের আলা কদিন লহিবে বালা
 কথার বাধিব কত গেলে।
 নদা নন্ত থাক রাগে কোন তার নাহি লাগে
 উপযুক্ত গহনী কোটাল।
 এক ভক্ত আর ছাি দেবদগ্ধ কব করি
 আনি হৈলে কুরায় জগাল।

have passed into bye-words. It would be difficult to overestimate the polish he has given to the Bengali language.

Another feature of Bharat Chandra's poetry is the vividness of his descriptions. As the descriptions are not always of a healthy character, the reader regrets that they are so vivid, but nevertheless confesses the power of the poet. In character-painting however, Bharat Chandra can not be compared with the great master whom he has imitated. Fullara and Khehlana are women of flesh and blood with distinct characters; in Bidya we can discover no trait of character except a capacity for voluptuous love. Durbala and Bharu Datta are powerfully-drawn portraits from life; Hira Malini is an over-drawn caricature. And in all the higher qualifications of a poet, in truth, in imagination, and even in true tenderness and pathos, such as we meet with in almost every other Bengali poet, Bharat Chandra is singularly and sadly wanting.

Bharat Chandra died three years after the battle of Plassey. New actors now entered on the stage; and new influences shaped the course of the literature of Bengal in the nineteenth century.

CHAPTER XIII.

RAM MOHAN RAI AND HIS RELIGIOUS REFORM.

1774-1833.

WE now enter upon the brightest period in the annals of Bengali literature. The British Conquest of Bengal was not merely a political revolution, but brought in a greater revolution in thought and ideas, in religion and social progress. The Hindu intellect came in contact with all that is noblest and most healthy in European history and literature, and profited by it. The Hindu mind was to some extent trained under the influence of European thoughts and ideas, and benefited by it.

Towards the close of the last century, Warren Hastings compiled Hindu and Muhammadan laws for the use of courts, and associated Pandits and Maulavis with European Judges for the administration of justice. This was the first intellectual contact between Europeans and the best educated natives of Bengal. In 1799 Carey, Ward and Marshman began their missionary work in Serampore and established a Bengali press; they printed the Mahabharata, the Ramayana, and other Bengali works; and they even started a Bengali newspaper. In 1800 Lord Wellesley established the Fort William College for the training of young civilians in the languages of India, secured the services of the most learned Pandits, and encouraged the compilation of vernacular



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works. Sir William Jones, Colebrooke and Wilson prosecuted researches into the untrodden field of Sanscrit learning and Indian antiquities ; they received the help of Hindu Pandits ; and they excited in the people of India an interest in their past literature and history. David Hare, a watchmaker in Calcutta, but a man of strong common sense and philanthropy, initiated English education in Bengal, and eventually helped in the establishment of the Hindu College in 1817. Richardson and Derozio were sympathetic teachers, and inspired in the young students of the Hindu College a passionate admiration for English literature and English institutions. And lastly, the great Macaulay advocated in his historic minute that higher education should be imparted to the people of India through the English language, and Lord William Bentinck closed his beneficent administration in 1835 by ratifying this minute, and placing English education in India on a solid foundation. These are, briefly, some of the steps by which English education and European influence have spread in Bengal in the present century.

Ram Mohan Rai was the first brilliant product of European influence in India. He was born at Radhanagar in the District of Hugli in 1774, the year in which Warren Hastings became the first Governor General of India, and the Supreme Court was established. The story of the life and work of the great reformer would fill a volume ; it is the story of the social, moral and intellectual progress of the Hindus during the first thirty years of this century. The great controversies in

which he engaged, first with his countrymen and then with Christian missionaries, mark the awakening of a new life in India. The pure and monotheistic Hindu faith which he preached, and the church which he established, flourish to the present day. And the numerous works which he published, in English and in Bengali, have now been compiled and placed in a collected form before his admiring countrymen. The venerable Raj Narayan Basu, himself a writer of merit and distinction, has done a signal service to the cause of Bengali literature by publishing the Bengali works of Raja Ram Mohan Rai. And later still, the English works of the great reformer have been edited and published in two stout octavo volumes by Jogendra Chandra Ghosh and Isan Chandra Basu. Our countrymen are grateful to them for this patriotic task ; but a proper biography of the great reformer has yet to be written. We can, within our limits, only narrate a few leading facts relating to his life and works.

Ram Mohan's father was Ram Kanta Rai, a petty Zemindar, who had served under the Nawabs of Murshidabad, and had witnessed their fall. And Ram Mohan's mother was Tarini Debi, a woman of great piety and remarkable firmness of character,—virtues which descended from mother to son.

Hindu boys, ambitious of obtaining employment, used to learn Bengali and Persian in those days ; and Ram Mohan acquired a knowledge of both the languages in his native village, and was then sent to Patna in his ninth year to learn Arabic. With his remarkable intelli-

gence, young Ram Mohan mastered the Persian and Arabic languages in three years, and then proceeded to Benares to study Sanscrit. This was the turning point of Rani Mohan's life ; It was in Benares that the young man not only mastered the Sanscrit language, but also acquired a knowledge of the noble tenets of the *Upanishads* and the *Pedanta*, which he made it his life's work to preach and proclaim to his countrymen.

After completing his education Ram Mohan returned to his native village, and at the early age of sixteen, in the year 1790, he wrote his famous work on the Idolatrous Religion of the Hindus (*হিন্দুধর্মের মৌলিক বর্ণনা*) which is the first literary work in Bengali prose that we know of. For while Bengali Poetry had flourished in the previous centuries, there was no such thing as a prose literature in Bengal. Raja Ram Mohan Rai is the *father of prose literature in Bengal*.

Ram Mohan's father was grieved and offended at the publication of the young reformer's early work,* and Ram Mohan had to leave his paternal home, and spent his time in travels.† It is said he penetrated into Thibet and remained there for three years, studying Buddhism.

* We regret we do not find this first work of Ram Mohan Rai in the collection of his works published by Raj Narayan Basu.

† Ram Mohan Rai himself wrote of this in an autobiographical sketch, addressed to a friend during his stay in England :-

"When about the age of sixteen I composed a manuscript calling in question the validity of the idolatrous system of the Hindus. This, together with my known sentiments on that subject, having produced a coolness between me and my immediate kindred, I proceeded on my travels, and passed through different countries, chiefly within, but some beyond the bounds of Hindustan."

His father now relented and called back his son to his home, and Ram Mohan began the study of the English language when he was 22 years of age. With his extraordinary intellect and his keen desire for learning he not only learnt the English so as to be able to write that language correctly, fluently and forcibly, but he also acquired some knowledge of French and Latin, and it is said, of Greek and Hebrew also. At the same time he carried on controversies with Brahmans about idol-worship, the burning of widows, and similar subjects.

On the death of his father he obtained an appointment under Government, and rose to be a Dewan or Sheristadar. He was employed for 13 years (1806-1819) in the service of Government, but the routine of official work did not suit his ardent mind, and in 1814 he retired from work and settled down in Calcutta.

He was now fully equipped for the great controversies into which he entered, on the one hand with orthodox Hindus with a view to lead them to the purer faith of their ancestors, and on the other hand with Christian missionaries who wished to replace Hinduism by Christianity in India. Ram Mohan Rai selected for the modern Hindu his true position in the religious world, and he fortified that position by translations from the ancient Upanishads and other Hindu scriptures, which had so long been the monopoly of a few Pandits, and which now came like a surprise and a joy to all thoughtful and pious Hindus.

It is not our purpose to enumerate all the works which proceeded from the great reformer's pen in this,

the most eventful period of his life, but it is necessary to mention some of the more important works. Ram Mohan retired from service and settled down in Calcutta, not to rest but to work, and works proceeded from his fertile pen with a rapidity which amazed and bewildered his friends and opponents alike. In 1815, appeared his Bengali rendering of *Vedanta* philosophy, and in the following year he published *Vedanta Sara* and an abridgment in English of that system of philosophy. The spirit, which inspired the pious and indomitable worker is well set forth in the concluding lines of his introduction to this work,—lines which should live in the memory of his countrymen as long as they continue to appreciate courage, honesty of purpose and devotion to duty.

"By taking the path which conscience and sincerity direct, I, born a Brahman, have exposed myself to the complaints and reproaches, even of some of my relations, whose prejudices are strong, and whose temporal advantage depends upon the present system. But these, however accumulated, I can tranquilly bear, trusting that a day will arrive, when my humble endeavours will be viewed with justice, perhaps acknowledged with gratitude. At any rate, whatever men may say, I cannot be deprived of this consolation : my motives are acceptable to that **Being** who beholds in secret and compensates openly."

The 1816 and 1817, he translated several *Upanishads* into Bengali and into English, and in the three following years he published his powerful and famous discourses in Bengali and in English, condemning the burning of widows. As a specimen of Ram Mohan Ray's Bengali prose style, we quote the concluding passage from the

first of these essays.* Our readers will see that Bengali prose had not yet received the purity and grace which

প্রবর্তক।—একশ সহস্ররূপে ও অশ্বমহরূপে পাণ্ডাই হটক কিবা দাড়া হটক আমরা এ ব্যবহারকে নিবর্ত্ত করিতে বিন না ইহার নিবৃত্তি হইলে হুতাং লৌকিক এক আশঙ্কা আছে যে আমির বৃত্তা হইলে শ্রী মহাবল না করিয়া নিধনা অপহৃত্য রহিলে তাহার ব্যক্তির ইহবার সম্ভাবনা থাকে কিন্তু সহস্ররূপ করিলে এ আশঙ্কা থাকে না জ্ঞাতি কুটুম্ব সকলেই বিশেষ ইয়া থাকেন এবং পতিও বহি জীবৎকালে স্নানিতে পারে তবে তাহারো মনে শ্রী পতিত কলার কোনো চিন্তা হয় না।

নিবর্ত্তক।—কেবল জাগি আশঙ্কাকে দূর করিবার নিমিত্তে একশ শ্রী কথ পাণ্ডে জানিয়াও নির্ধর হইল জানি সুখিক প্রবর্ত্ত হইতেছে তবে ইহাতে আমরা কি করিতে পারি কিন্তু ব্যক্তিরের আশঙ্কা পতি বর্ত্তমান থাকিতেই বা কোন না আছে বিশেষত পতি দূর দেশে বতকাল থাকিলে ঐ আশঙ্কার সম্ভাবনা কেন না থাকে অতএব সে আশঙ্কা নিবৃত্তির উপায় কি করিবার।

প্রবর্ত্তক।—পারি বর্ত্তমানে ও অবর্ত্তমানে অনেক প্রভেদ আছে যে হেতু আমি বর্ত্তমানে থাকিলে মিকটেই থাকুন কিবা দূরদেশেই থাকুন শ্রী সঙ্গনা আমিই শাসনেই থাকে বিশেষ হইতে পারে না আমি বৃত্তা হইলে পর দেহরূপ শাসন থাকে না সুতরাং বিশেষ হয়।

নিবর্ত্তক।—যে শাস্ত্রানুসারে পতি বর্ত্তমানে পতির শাসনে শ্রীকে থাকিতে হয় সেই শাস্ত্রেই নিধন পতি করিলে পতি কুলে তাহার অভাবে পিতৃকুলে তাহারের শাসনে বিবরা থাকিবেন এবং ব্রহ্মহত্য হেলাদিপাত্তকে নিমগ্না করিয়া শাস্ত্র কহিয়াছেন তবে আমি বর্ত্তমান থাকিলে কি তাহার অবর্ত্তমানে আমি জীবিতের শাসন জাগ ও ব্যক্তিরের সম্ভাবনা কদাপি নিবৃত্তি হইতে পারে না যে হেতু অনেক অনেক দানে প্রত্যক্ষ দেখিতেছ যে আমি বর্ত্তমান থাকিতেও তাহার শাসনে শ্রী না থাকিলে বতরা হইতেছে। আত্মম শাসনা জনা মুখর্ষ হইতে নিবর্ত্ত করিবার কারণ শাসন দাত হইতে পারে না কিন্তু জানের উপদেশ ইহারের গুর মুখর্ষ হইতে কি শ্রীকে কি পুনরূপে নিবর্ত্ত করায় ইহা শাস্ত্রেও প্রত্যক্ষ দেখিতেছি।

প্রবর্ত্তক।—ভূমি আনাদিগো পুনঃ পুনঃ করিতেক যে নির্ভীকতা করিয়া আমরা জীবনে প্রবর্ত্ত হই এ অতি অযোগ্য যে হেতু প্রতি ক্ষুত্রিতে সঙ্গীত করিতেছেন যে মদ্য সকল গর্ভের মূল হয় এবং অতিশয় সেবাধি পরম্পরা অবস্থায়ে যাবা আনাদিগের ইদানন্তা সঙ্গীত প্রকাশ আছে।

subsequent writers have imparted to it. But Ram Mohan's rugged and well-reasoned style suited the great task he set before himself,—to battle single-handed against a host of unreasoning antagonists, and to expose evil customs and harmful practices. Raja Radha Kanta Deb headed the orthodox party in those days, defended existing practices, and stood forth against all reform. It was a curious spectacle, that of a Brahman seeking to remove the abuses of modern Hinduism, and a Kayastha standing forth as their champion and defender ! The whole orthodox party gathered round Raja Radha Kanta, angry Pandits indulged in violent attacks and vituperation, and for a time Ram Mohan's life was in danger, and he went about with a guard. But the great and undaunted reformer never swerved one inch from the path he had chosen, and he triumphed over all opposition.

নিবর্তক ।—অন্ত অস্ত বিষয়ে তোমাদের দম্ভার দাহনা আছে এ বর্ষার্থ ঐটে কিন্তু বালক কাল অবধি আপন আপন প্রাচীন লোকের এক প্রতি-
বাদির ও অন্য অন্য প্রামহ লোকের দ্বারা জ্ঞান মূলক স্ত্রীস্বামী পুনঃ পুনঃ
বেধিবাতে এবং দাই কালীন স্ত্রীলোকের কাতরতায় মিষ্টর থাকতে
তোমাদের বিরুদ্ধ সংস্কার আছে এই নিমিত্ত কি স্ত্রীর কি পুরুষের মরণ
কালীন কাতরতাতে তোমাদের দম্ভা আছে না যেমন শাস্ত্রের বাল্যাবধি
ছাপ মহিষ্যদি হনন পুনঃ পুনঃ বেধিবার দ্বারা ছাপ মহিষ্যদির বধ কালীন
কাতরতাতে হয়। আছে না কিন্তু বৈদ্যবদের অত্যন্ত দম্ভা হয় ।

প্রবর্তক ।—তুমি যাহা যাহা কহিলে তাহা আমি বিশেষ মতে বিবেচনা
করিব ।

নিবর্তক ।—এ অতি অজ্ঞানের বিষয় যে এখন তুমি এবিধের বিবেচনা
করিতে প্রবর্ত্ত হইলে লক্ষপাত পরিভ্রমে করিয়া শাস্ত্র বিবেচনা করিলে
যাহা শাস্ত্র সিদ্ধ হয় তাহার অবশ্য নিশ্চয় হইতে পারিবেক এবং একপ
জীবন জন্য পাপ হইতে দেশের অনিষ্ট ও ভয়ঙ্কর আর হইবেক না ইতি ।

The invincible combatant next turned his arms against the Christian missionaries of Serampore. There is a history connected with his *Precepts of Jesus* and his three *Appeals* which is worth recording. These essays were published between 1820 and 1823, and occupy over five hundred closely printed octavo pages of Ram Mohan's English works. From early youth, Ram Mohan preached monotheism and a pure system of morality, and he was attracted by the teachings of Christ when he came in contact with Christians. In 1820, he published in Sanskrit and in Bengali the *Precepts of Jesus*, separating them "from the abstruse doctrines and miraculous relations of the New Testament." This gave offence to the Serampore missionaries, and a reply appeared in the *Friend of India*, the editor Dr. Marshman adding his own observation, and calling Ram Mohan a "heathen."

Ram Mohan published his first and second *Appeals*, in defence of his *Precepts*, and printed them at the Baptist Mission Press, and Dr. Marshman successively replied to them. But when Ram Mohan came forward with his third and *Final Appeal*, the Baptist Mission Press refused to print it. Ram Mohan was not to be baffled; he established a press of his own, and published his *Final Appeal* with its formidable array of Hebrew and Greek quotations. Dr. Marshman republished his replies in London, and the Unitarian Society there published Ram Mohan's *Appeals* in 1824, and they were republished in America, in 1828.

The remarkable ability and learning displayed by

Ram Mohan were at once acknowledged in Europe and in America. Dr. Carpenter, commenting on the second *Appeal* said, "that the excellent author is distinguished by the closeness of his reasoning, the critical accuracy of his scriptural knowledge, the comprehensiveness of his investigations, the judiciousness of his arrangements, the lucid statements of his opinions, and the acuteness and skill with which he controverts the positions of his opponents.*"

But it was not the task of controverting the opinions of his opponents, it was not the task of *destruction*, which Ram Mohan set before himself as the great work of his life. It was the task of *construction*, it was the task of leading back his countrymen to the pure religion of the *Upanishads* and the *Vedanta*, which he set before himself. As early as 1814, immediately after his retirement from the service of Government, Ram Mohan founded the *Atmiya Sabha* for the worship of the One Invisible God of the *Upanishads*. Later on, he established the *Veda Mandir* for the study of the Vedas. Many pious and prayerful men gathered round him, and the cause of Hindu monotheism prospered in spite of all opposition. And at last, in 1828, he established the Brahma Samaj, the crowning work of his life, "for the worship and adoration of the Eternal, Unsearchable, Immutable Being who is the Author and Preserver of the Universe." Dwarka Nath Tagore and Prasanna Kumar Tagores helped him, and stood by him in this noble work, and Ram Chandra

* The proper spelling of the name is *Thamer*; but we write it as the members of this cultured family write their names.

Vidyabagis was the minister of the Church from the commencement. It was this minister who kept up the church after Ram Mohan's death, until Dwarka Nath's son Devendra nath Tagore accepted the religion of the Brahma Samaj and became its stay and support.

We have so long spoken of Ram Mohan's labours in the cause of religion, for his fame rests mainly on his religious reform. But his keen intellect and encyclopædic mind grasped every question which attracted public attention, and in every question his vast energies were enlisted in the cause of reform. Ram Mohan Rai and David Hare and Sir Edward Hyde East were the prime movers in the founding of the Hindu College in 1817. In 1823 Ram Mohan addressed a letter to Lord Amherst then Governor General, which almost foreshadows Lord Macaulay's famous minute on the merits of Sanscrit and English education.* And in the same year we find him, along with Dwarka Nath Tagore

*We quote the concluding passages of Ram Mohan's letter here. "The Sanscrit system of education would be the best calculated to keep this country in darkness, if such had been the policy of the British legislature. But as the improvement of the native population is the object of the Government, it will consequently promote a more liberal and enlightened system of instruction, embracing Mathematics, Natural Philosophy, Chemistry, Anatomy, with other useful sciences, which may be accomplished with the sums proposed by employing a few gentlemen of talent and learning educated in Europe, and providing a College furnished with necessary books, instruments, and other apparatus.

In presenting this subject to your Lordship, I conceive myself discharging a solemn duty which I owe to my countrymen, and also to that enlightened sovereign and legislature which have extended their benevolent care to this distant land, actuated by a desire to improve the inhabitants, and therefore humbly trust you will excuse the liberty I have taken in thus expressing my sentiments to your Lordship."

and Prasanna Kumar Tagore, appealing to the Supreme Court and then to the throne of England for the liberty of the Press, and thus starting that system of constitutional agitation for political rights which his countrymen have learned to value so much in the present day.

Ram Mohan also wrote on the rights of Hindu females in ancient times, and on other legal questions, but it was his prolonged endeavours to abolish the rite of *Sati* which brought him to prominent notice with the rulers of the country. We have seen that he began the controversy in 1818, and after twelve years of persistent agitation he had the satisfaction of witnessing the triumph of the holy and righteous cause.*

It was thus that Ram Mohan Rai ardently and enthu-

*Raja Radha Kanta Deb, as the leader of the orthodox community, opposed the abolition of *Sati*. Ram Mohan Rai and his party supported Government on this memorable occasion, and presented an address to Lord William Bentinck after he had suppressed the cruel rite. The reply of the Governor General to this address is worth quoting.

"It is very satisfactory for me to find that, according to the opinions of so many respectable and intelligent Hindus, the practice which has recently been prohibited, not only was not required by the rules of their religion, but was at variance with those writings which they deem to be of the greatest force and authority. Nothing but a reluctance to inflict punishment for acts which might be conscientiously believed to be enjoined by religious precepts, could have induced the British Government at any time to permit, within territories under its protection, an usage so violently opposed to the best feelings of human nature. Those who present this address are right in supposing that by every nation in the world, except the Hindus themselves, this part of their custom has always been made a reproach against them, and nothing so strangely contrasted with the better features of their own national character, so inconsistent with the affections which unite families, so destructive of the moral principles on which society is founded, has ever subsisted amongst a people in other respects so civilized. I trust that the reproach is removed for ever; and I feel a sincere pleasure in

siatically supported every movement towards reform and towards the regeneration of his country. Never since the days of Chaitanya has Bengal witnessed such intense agitation as during the first quarter of this century. Never has one man attempted and achieved more for his country than Ram Mohan Rai.

The Emperor of Delhi wished to send an agent to England to represent some of his grievances, and he chose Ram Mohan as his agent, and bestowed on him the title of Raja. Raja Ram Mohan had always eagerly wished to visit the western world and gladly seized this opportunity, and he left for Europe in 1830.

His stay in England brought him no rest. His fame had preceded him, and Ram Mohan Rai was requested to give his evidence before the Select Committee of the House of Commons on the Judicial and Revenue Systems of India. The masterly essay which he wrote on this subject occupies over a hundred pages of his collected English works. He was also examined on the condition of the native inhabitants of India, and he wrote on the subject of European Colonization of India.

One of his great objects in proceeding to Europe however was to support the abolition of the rite of *Sati* in the House of Commons. He presented the petitions which he had brought with him to the House of Commons and the House of Lords in person, and had the satisfaction of being present when the appeal

thinking that the Hindus will thereby be exalted in the estimation of mankind to an extent in some degree, proportioned to the reprobation which was left for the usage which has now ceased."

against the abolition of *Sati* was rejected on the 11th of July, 1832.

Ram Mohan's great acquirements and noble work became known all over England and in other countries of Europe, and his presence was courted in the highest circles and by men of learning. The poet Campbell wrote of him, the antiquarian Rosen consulted him when he was translating the *Rig Veda*, and the greatest living philosopher of England, Jeremy Bentham, received him with open arms, and addressed him as "*Intensely admired and dearly beloved collaborator in the service of mankind.*"*

After a residence of three years in Europe, Raja Ram Mohan Rai died on the 27th September 1833, and his remains were interred in Bristol. A tomb was subsequently erected there by his friend and distinguished countryman Dwarka Nath Tagore.

We have spoken of Ram Mohan's work in the formation of Bengali prose. Scarcely less eminent are his services in lyrical verse. The reader will scarcely suspect the enthusiastic reformer to be the author of some of the finest and noblest songs which the Bengali language has known.† But the reformer had a heart

*"Your works" wrote Bentham to Ram Mohan, "are made known to me by a book in which I read a style which, but for the name of a Hindu, I should certainly have ascribed to the pen of a superiorly educated and instructed Englishman." And in the same letter, while praising James Mill's great work on the History of India, Bentham remarked: "though as to style I wish I could with truth and sincerity pronounce it equal to yours."

† One of two specimens are given here:

মনে পুঁথুর করিরাছে চিরাদিন কি স্থাপে বাসে ।
জীবন যৌবন ধন নান রূপে সমস্তাবে ॥

full of tenderness, piety and genuine feeling ; and his songs excite the noblest emotions of the human soul. After a lapse of seventy years, the songs of Ram Mohan Rai are still sung in every home in Bengal.

এই আশা তুচ্ছতলে বসিয়াছে কুতুহলে ।
 বিষয় করিয়া কোলে স্নান না ত্যজিতে হবে ॥
 আলো মন শুন সার দিবা অস্তে অস্তকীর ।
 সুখাশ্তে দুঃখেরই আঁচ বহিতে হবে ॥
 অস্ত্রের অপমান যে অবধি থাকে প্রাণ ।
 প্রহর কর সমাধান নির্মল আনন্দ পাবে ॥

মনে কর শেষের সে দিন ভয়ঙ্কর ।
 অনো নাক্য কবে কিছ তুমি রণে নিলঙ্কর ॥
 যার প্রতি বত নাহা কিবা পুত্র কিবা অস্ত্র ॥
 তা'র মূণ ঢেঁচে ভিত্ত হইবে কস্তুর ॥
 গৃহে হার হার শব্দ সমুখে স্বজন স্তম্ভ ।
 দৃষ্টদীন মাড়ীকীর্ণ হিম কলেবর ॥
 অতএব সাবধান তাজ দস্ত অস্ত্রদান ।
 বৈরাগ্য অভ্যাগে কর যত্নেতে নির্ভর ॥

CHAPTER XIV.

ISWAR CHANDRA GUPTA AND HIS SATIRES.

1809-1858.

ISWAR CHANDRA GUPTA was born in the village of Kanchiapara in 1809, and is the earliest Bengali poet of the present century. His poetry forms a connecting link between the old school of Mukunda Ram and Bharat Chandra and the new school of Madhu Sudan and Hem Chandra. Born when the Hindu society was in a transition state, and naturally endowed with a keen humour, he freely ridiculed much that was false and hollow, and also much that was earnest and true, in the movements of his time. As a poet Iswar Chandra does not rank very high, as a satirist he stands first among the writers of Bengal.

Iswar Chandra's poems have lately been published in a collected form with a memoir of the poet's life by the late Bankim Chandra Chatterjee. This work will be our guide in the present chapter.

Iswar Chandra's father was of humble means, and was employed on a pay of eight Rupees a month in a factory close to his native village. Iswar sometimes lived in his village, and sometimes in Calcutta in the house of his maternal uncle. He lost his mother at

an early age, and his father married again, much to the disgust of young Iswar. After this event Iswar lived mostly in Calcutta, in the house of his maternal uncle.

The education of the future poet was neglected; he acquired a knowledge of Bengali in Patshahas, and also learnt a little English. He frequented the house of the Tagore family in Pathuriaghata, and gradually rose to distinction under the patronage of that family. He was married at the age of 15, against his wishes as we are informed, and domestic bliss was not in store for the young pair.

Under the patronage and with the help of the Tagore family, Iswar Chandra started a journal called *Sambad Prabhakar* in 1836, and the talent and genius of the young editor soon attracted the attention of the literary world to the journal. Among the writers in this journal we see the names of the most distinguished men of the times, like Raja Radha Kanta Deb, Ram Kamal Sen, Hara Kumar Tagore, Prasanna Kumar Tagore, Pandit Jay Gopal Tarkatankar, Pandit Prem Chand Tarkabagish and others.

Iswar Chandra's productions appeared in prose and verse in this journal. He was an imitator of Bharat Chandra's style, but was not a mere imitator. His keen powers of satire are his own, and his verses on society and life and on the events which were transpiring around him, written in a free and easy style, are among the happiest pieces in their way in the whole range of Bengali

literature.* The poetry is not of a very high order, but Iswar Chandra's witty and flowing verse, his satirical hits,

* A few instances will suffice.

ইংগ্ৰাজী নববর্ষ ।

সোনার সন্দেশে বিহীন কথা শুই হৌলৈ ।
 তেন মেহে বনো বিহা বিবিতের বেলে ॥
 রাগো মূগ দেখে বাবা টেনে বস্ত হান্ ।
 ভোট কেবাব হিন্দুমানী ডায়ে ভাণ ভাণ ॥
 পিড়ি পেতে কুরো পুনে মিছে খনি দেহ ।
 নিলে নাহি বিশ খায় কিসে হবে ফেহ ॥
 লাড়ী পরা একোচুল আঁধারের মেঘ ।
 বেলাক নেটন নেড়ি শেখ শেখ শেখ ॥
 মিলুয়ের বিলু সহ কপালেতে উকি ।
 ননী, কন্দী, কন্দী, বাবী, রানী শ্যাবী, ভক্তি ॥
 মরে থেকে চিরকাল পায় মহা সুখ ।
 কখনও কেনেবা পর পুরুষের মূগ ॥
 এই রূপে হিন্দু বামা শুদ্ধাচারে থেকে ।
 না পার হুবেই আলো অন্ধকারে থেকে ॥
 কোথায় নেটন লেজি বলি শুন মরে ।
 পক্ষর পত্নারে আর কত কাল রবে ॥
 ঘন্য রে নোক্তগবানি ঘন্য ভাল জল ।
 ঘন্য ঘন্য দিনাকের সন্তাতার বল ॥

পৌষপর্যর্কন ।

তোমার কি দর পানে কিছু নাই টান ।
 হাওন্তের হাতে যাঁহ অন্তর্নীর প্রাণ ॥
 কি বলিব বাপ মায়ে কেন দিল বিয়ে ।
 * এক দিন তুমি নাই ঘর করা নিয়ে ॥
 কোর্মণ্ডি দিন না করিলে সাংসারের জিয়ে ।
 নিয়ানিশি ঘেহে শুধু দোষে তেল দিয়ে ॥

and his vivid descriptions were learnt by rote by a large circle of readers, and were the theme of never-

মনে মাত্ৰ গুই গাছা খাঙ্কু ছিল হাতে ।
 তংহাও নিয়াছ বাঁধা খেতেইর ভাতে ॥
 হুদে হুদে বেড়ে খেল কে করে খালস ।
 ষাঁচিগার সাধ নাই মনেই খালস ॥
 হাত্তি দিন খেটে মরি এক সন্ধ্যা খেতে ।
 এক আলা মধ্য করি আমি যাই মেয়ে ॥
 এই কপ প্রতি মরে দৃশ্য মনোহর ।
 খিল্লীর কাঁকু নী হয় কঠোর উপর ॥
 মাঝীলের নাহি আর তিন রাজি ঘুম ।
 গড়াখড়ি ছড়াখড়ি রফনের ধুম ॥
 পাবকাশ নাই মাত্ৰ এক চুল ঝাঁবে ।
 ডাল ঝোল বাচে ভাত রাশি রাশি রাঁবে ॥
 কত তার কাঁচা থাকে কত বাগ পুড়ে ।
 লাগে হাঁবে পরমান নবনের ভুড়ে ॥
 বধূর রন্ধনে যদি যায় তাহা একে ।
 শক্তকী নন্দ কত কথা কত বৈকে ॥
 হালা বৌ কি করিলি বেয়ে মন ভেটে ।
 এই প্রাণা শিবেছিল মাঝের নিকটে ॥
 মাত্ৰ ভ্রম ভাত বিনা যদি মরি ভুপে ।
 তথাচ এমন রাজা নাই কিই মুখে ॥
 বধূর মধুর ধনি মুখ শতধল ।
 নলিল তাসিয়া যার চক্ষু হল ছল ॥
 আছা তার হাছাকাব বুন্নিবার মত ।
 মুষ্টিতে না পারে কিছু মনে মনে রত ॥
 জাগাফলে রান্না সব ভাল হয় কীর ।
 ঠাকারেতে মাটিতে পা নাই পড়ে তাঁর ॥
 হাসি হাসি মুখ পানি অপকপ আঁড় ।
 বৈকে বৈকে যান কিম্বী দিয়ে নথ নাড়া ॥
 ইংগো মিলি এই শাক র'বিয়াছি রেতেশ
 মাথা খাঙ মতি বল, ভাল লাগে খেতে ॥

ending admiration. No renowned poet appeared in Bengal in the first half of the present century, and Iswar

দিল্লি হিন্দু কেন য়োন্ হেন কথা কহে ।
 ষাট্টি ষাট্টি বেঁচে থাকি জন্ম এমো হারে ॥
 দুক্খবেরা ভালে সব বলিয়াছে খেঁচে ।
 জালে রাগে বেঁধেছিল মন্য তুই নেহে ॥

ছয় মিশনরী ।

মূৰ্ব হয়ে মরে থাকে মধ্যপথ ধরে ।
 কায় নাই হুঙ্কুমেতে লেখা গড়া করে ॥
 ছাঃদেয়ে ছেলেরূপ মন বড় কাল ।
 আপন আপন ছেলে-মামাল মানাল ॥
 মিষ্টভাবী শুভাকার মিশনরি ব্রত ।
 আশ্বিনের পক্ষে তাঁরা ব্যাধির্গৃহত ॥
 পিতার সুখের নিধি জনম ততন ।
 কিছু নাহি বুঝে তার মনের মতন ॥
 শূন্য করি জননীস জন্ম জাগরি ।
 হরণ করিয়া নয় সাধের কুমারি ॥
 ব্যাকোর বৃদ্ধক যোগে ঐকান্ত ছেড়ে ।
 দুঃখীর দুঃখ গিরে পতি লব কেড়ে ॥
 কাশিনীর কোল শূন্য গুর মন তার ।
 এ বেশ কহিব কারে হার হার হার ॥
 দিন্যাদান ছল করি মিশনরি জব ।
 পাতিয়াছে ভাল এক নিখশ্বের টব ॥

পাঁচি ।

জনসঙ্গ রমময় রসের ছায়ায় ।
 জেনার কারণে আনি হুঃখি পাগল ॥

Chandra was the reigning king of the literary world in his day. But the king had his opponents! One Gauri Sankar Bhattacharja started a rival paper, and a battle of verse was waged for some time, marked more by abuse than by wit!

স্বর্ণ কুব্জী রত্ন গর্ভে জননী ভোমরে ।
 উলরে ভোমার ধরে ধরা স্তন তারি ॥
 তুমি আর পেটে থাক সেই পুণ্যবান্ ।
 সানু মাধু সানু তুমি ছাগীর লঙ্কান ॥
 জুতাপেতে তরে লোক তব দান নিয়া ।
 বাচালে রক্ষের প্রাণ নিহত বৃত্ত ফিয়া ॥
 চান মুখে চাপে মাড়ি গালে নাই খোঁপে ।
 শূণ বাড়্য ছাড়্য ডাড়্য লোহে লোহে খোঁপ ॥

নীলকরনিগের অত্যাচার ।

হোলে নীল করনের অনরবি মোতিটরি তার ।
 কুইন না, বা, মালো
 হোলে নীল করনের অনরবি মোতিটরি তার ।
 পড়েছে সব পাখর বক্ষে অত্যাগা প্রজার পক্ষে
 বিচারে রক্ষে নাই কো আর ।
 নীলকরের হস্ত নীলে নীলে মিলে সব নিলে
 দেশে উঠেছে এই ভাষ যত প্রজার সঙ্গনশে ।
 খুইয়াল বিচারকারী সারিয়াল মহকারী
 ধানরের হাতে হোল কালের পঙ্কা
 মোস্তাফি কলে চাব ।
 হোলো ভাইবের কোলে ছেলে নোপা
 চিলেহ দালাহ মাচা
 হবে বাঘের হাতে গাণের রক্ষে
 জননি কেউ সনবে না ॥

In course of time, Iswar Chandra started the monthly *Prabhakar*, teeming with his inexhaustible verse, and also with prose compositions. He wrote the lives of the older Bengali poets, Mukunda Ram, Bharat Chandra, Rany Prasad and others in this journal, and this was the first attempt to compile the biographies of our old writers. The monthly *Prabhakar* became a power in the land, and young writers of talent and genius like Dina Bandhu Mitra and Bankim Chandra, who subsequently rose to fame and distinction, served their first apprenticeship under Iswar Chandra Gupta in the monthly *Prabhakar*.

Iswar Chandra also took part in recitations and musical performances, (গোষ্ঠানী, হাফ আক্কাই &c.), which were in fashion in his day, and his ready wit and ready

মুদকীর যুদ্ধ ।

হেরেছে বিমম যুদ্ধ শীতলগ নকে ।
 বেগেছে ইংরেজ মোক্‌ বণ বণ বকে ॥
 নেয়েছে অগণ্য লৈলু কি কণ নিস্তার ।
 বেজেছে ক্ষয়ের ডকা বাহিক নিস্তার ॥
 বেড়েছে বৃষ্টিগ সেনা, সংগা গত্র লত ।
 নেড়েছে প্রাণের নাগা দুখে হয়ে রত ॥
 দেয়েছে গমর হুল গরে নিজ বন ।
 দেয়েছে এগার শীকে, হইয়া প্রবল ॥
 নেয়েছে বিপদগণে মুদকীর রণে ।
 হেরেছে নকল শত্রু গোরাগের লনে ।
 মস্তপেছে লগুন যুদ্ধে নরী গরে হতে ।
 মেগেছে অগণ্য পুন্নি নিরস্ত্রান গরে ॥

verse were much appreciated. In his last days he turned to more serious works, mostly translations from the Sanscrit like his *Prabodha Prabhakar* and *Bodhendu Bikas*. The extract which we give below* from *Bodhendu Bikas* is a fair specimen of Iswar Chandra's

* হে জীব সকল : এই সংসারকে অনিত্য জ্ঞান করিয়া নিঃশেষে পরিত্যক্ত
 হরণ কর,—মনের সকল আশ্রয়ান হরণ কর,—মস্তকোপরে মনের মন্দিরে
 বসন কর,—কেবল আনন্দ রূপে চরণ কর,—জীবন জীবনবিষ-বৎ, নিঃশেষে
 প্রতি বিবাহ নাই, এখনই বিনাশ হইবে, অতএব বস্ত্র পাতি ততই সৎকার্য্য
 সাধন কর,—ইতিবাণীর বশীকৃত হইয়া সৎকার্য্যের সৎকার্য্য করা উচিত
 হয় না, পরম জ্ঞেয়ের প্রেমিক হও, সকলের প্রিয় হইয়া প্রেম পাশে সকলকে
 বদ্ধ কর। এই জগতীয়াসে কে তোমার শত্রু আছে? তুমি কাহাকে শত্রু
 জ্ঞান কর? তুমি বিবেচনা হোয়ে আপনিই আপনার শত্রু হইতেছ, কারণ
 সেহের কারণ না জানিয়া বেহেতে আত্মবোধ করত বোহতর আশ্রয়ান
 বশতঃ কেবল ত্রিগুণবিশেষে চরিতার্থ করিতেছে।—এই আশ্রয়ান, এই
 অহঙ্কার, এই শত্রু ইহারা তোমার বস্ত্র শত্রু আর কেহই নাই।—যদি এই
 ত্রিগুণবিশেষে বপুঃস্বা পরিভোজ্যিক অন্নপত্র প্রোমাৎ চিবমাণ্ড ঘন হইত,
 তবে অহঙ্কার একদিন পোতা পাইত।—স্বকৃৎ প্রতিকণ্ঠেই নিজ নিকটে
 আসান করিতেছে, এখনি মুক্ত্যন্তরে চরণ-পদন লগ্ন।

জগতের শোভা মর্শন কর,—কি বিনোদ-বাগ্যাত-কূহ বিলোকিত
 হইতেছে। কিন্তু এই অল্পত জুতের ব্যাপার দেখিতে দেখিতে জুতে কতি-
 কূত হওয়া উচিত হয় না। যিনি সকল জুতের কর্তা, জুতান্তিত জুতনাগ
 তাহারই ভগ্নে অতিভূত হও। রত্নাকর সমুদ্রে এবং এই রত্নময়ী বহুশা-
 গর্ভে যে সকল রত্নরাজী রাজীত আছে, তৎসমূহ একত্র করিয়া সমস্তাৎ
 করিলেও অসমাত্র বসার্থে অগের সকার হইতে পারে না। এই বিভিন্ন
 শগন ক্ষেত্র বিরাচিত চন্দ্র, সূর্য্য, বায়ু, এবং বায়ি প্রাকৃতি কি কখনো
 প্রোমাৎ চিরস্থায়ী স্থায়ী করিতে পারে? কেননা মানব কৃত কার্য্য জনীত
 অথবা প্রাকৃতিক-ভগ্নকে প্রকৃত স্থানের মধ্যেই গননা করা অসম্ভব না, দেহেজু
 এই সমস্ত স্থব্র অশিনাশী এবং অনন্ত নহে, অথ, কার্য্যই নিমগ্ন হইতেছে,
 অথচ ইহাতে কেবল চরতের অংশই অশিন, ঐ অংশই অনিত্য স্থব্রের
 বিচ্ছেদকালীন যেতপ চরতের উদয় হয়, তাহা শরীর এবং মনের পক্ষে কত

prose style. Our readers will observe that Bengali prose was not yet perfect. Iswar Chandra's prose is not as happy and natural as his poetry, but is artificial and alliterative, and somewhat grotesque.

MINOR POETS.

Among the minor poets who flourished in the first half of this century, one at least deserves mention. Madan Mohan Tarkalankar was a contemporary of Iswar Chandra. He was born in 1815, and was for sometime Professor in the Sanscrit College, and subsequently became a Judge-Pandit and then a Deputy Collector. He died in 1858, *i. e.* in the same year with Iswar Chandra Gupta. His *Rasa Tarangini* is a translation into ornate and musical Bengali verse of some Sanscrit verses on love; and his *Kusavadatta* is a Bengali adaptation of the well-known Sanscrit novel of that name by Subandhu.

কষ্টসাধ্যক বিবেচনা কর। হে যানব। বিশেষ অভিধানে পুঙ্ক এই
অন্যে সংসারে সংসার লক্ষ্যীত্ব প্রথমে আশা পরিহার কর। শুদ্ধ শুদ্ধচিত্তে
এক একরে অথবা অনন্ত, প্রব সন্তোষ কর, বাহার লহিত চুপেবে কিছুবার
সংস্রব নাই।

Some of Iswar Chandra's compound words are virtually Sanskrit compounds. The following passage from *Madhanda Biban* will illustrate this.

কেন না কুমি এইকালে মব মব মরমবল্লভপদ্য মল্লরীমণ্ডনমণ্ডিত
নব নব স্বচাঁপস্বর স্বরতিসুরগুনদলগুণোদ্ভিত মূহ বৃহ মল্ল্যামিলসেবিত
মুগ্ধামদন মধুকর নিবন্ধগুপ্তিত কোকিলকুল কলকুচিত কমনীর কুল
কালনে কুটিলকুণ্ডলা কুরঙ্গাকী কুলকামিনী কুলকর সগারণ পুরসের বিহার
হুগে স্থবী হুইতে ইচ্ছা কর।

CHAPTER XV.

AKHAY KUMAR DATTA.

1820-1886.

AKHAY KUMAR DATTA and Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar were the true successors of Raja Ram Mohan Rai. They inherited his strong enthusiasm for social reform and devoted their lives to the good of their country. And they also perfected the literary prose style of Bengal which was first rudely shaped by Raja Ram Mohan Rai.

Both Akhay Kumar and Iswar Chandra were born in 1820, Akhay Kumar being senior by two months. Both set before themselves the same lofty purpose, *viz.* the moral instruction of the people and the reform of social abuses. Both contributed to the formation of a chaste and dignified literary prose style in Bengali. And both lived to a ripe old age, and have lately been taken away from us, honored and lamented by the nation. A meritorious biography of Akhay Kumar has been compiled by Mahendra Nath Vidyanidhi, and an equally meritorious life of Vidyasagar has been compiled by Chandi Charan Banerjee. We cordially acknowledge our indebtedness to both these industrious writers.

Akhay Kumar was born in Chopi, near Nabadwip, and was the son of Pitambar Datta. His mother was Dayamayi, a woman who was distinguished alike by her

remarkable intelligence and her natural piety ; and like Ram Mohan Rai, Akhay Kumar inherited the virtues of his mother. He learned Bengali in his village Patschala and also picked up a knowledge of Persian ; and at the age of ten he came to Kidderpore near Calcutta, where his father was staying.

The story of the early struggles of Akhay Kumar to acquire sound knowledge through the English language is among the most touching episodes of his instructive life. A copy of Pearson's *Dialogues on Geography and Astronomy*, in English and Bengali, fell into his hands, and the young boy of ten read with intense interest and delight the account of clouds, rain, lightning and thunder, in the Bengali version. His eager mind was filled with a desire to know more of the secrets and laws of nature, and at this early age Akhay Kumar determined to learn English in order to acquire such knowledge.

After studying with private teachers for some years to little purpose, the enthusiastic boy got himself admitted in a Missionary school at Kidderpur. His father was alarmed, for a Missionary school was, in those days, looked upon with dread. It was at last settled that the intractable boy would reside with a cousin in Calcutta, and attend the Oriental Seminary, a Hindu institution where English was taught. Akhay Kumar was admitted there at the age of sixteen, and virtually commenced his English education at this age ; the knowledge of English which he had been able to acquire before this was but nominal.

But poor Akhay Kumar's difficulties were not yet at an end. He could pay no schooling fees for the period of one year, and the penniless boy came to the proprietor, Gaur Mohan Adhya, with tears in his eyes, and asked permission to leave the school, as he could not afford to pay. Gaur Mohan had marked the intelligence and the uprightness of the boy, he took pity on him, and permitted him to pursue his studies without payment of fees.

But a long course of instruction in this institution was not in store for Akhay Kumar. On the death of his father at Benares, he had to leave the school after remaining there for less than three years. His keen desire for knowledge, however, continued unabated, the study of Natural Science had special attraction for him, and he continued the study after leaving school. And at the age of twenty he began to learn Sanscrit, the knowledge of which befitted him for the great task of his life, the development of Bengali prose literature.

Iswar Chandra Gupta was then the king of the literary world in Bengal, and Akhay Kumar became acquainted with him. On one occasion, Iswar Chandra asked Akhay to translate an article which had appeared in an English daily paper. "But I have never composed anything in Bengali prose," said young Akhay, "how can I translate this?" With his usual kindness for talented young men, the veteran Iswar Chandra encouraged him in the task, and admired his performance when it was done. Such was Akhay Kumar's initiation

into the status of a Bengali writer, and henceforth he began to compose articles for the *Prabhakar*.

But such compositions did not pay, and Akhay Kumar had now to seek for means of livelihood. Various friends gave him various advices. One advised him to be a Daroga; and Akhay Kumar seriously began studies to qualify himself for such a post. Soon however he turned away from those studies in disgust; the Police Department lost an honest Daroga, and Bengal gained the most talented author and enthusiastic reformer of his day! Another friend advised the young man to study law; but Akhay Kumar instinctively felt, it was not the vocation for him. "Laws change from day to day," he said, "what is the good of studying them? I desire to learn the immutable and unchangeable laws of nature which rule the universe." Thus time rolled on, and eventually, Akhay Kumar discovered his true vocation in life.

The venerable Debendra Nath Tagore had taken up the task of religious reform which Raja Ram Mohan had initiated, and ten years after Ram Mohan's death in England, started the *Tattvesodhini Patrika*, a monthly journal, in 1843. Young Akhay Kumar, then only a youth of 23, became the editor of the paper which soon became a power in the land. It is scarcely possible in the present day, when journals have multiplied all over the country, to adequately describe how eagerly the moral instructions and earnest teachings of Akhay Kumar, conveyed in that famous paper, were perused by a large circle of thinking and enlightened readers.

People, all over Bengal, awaited every issue of that paper with eagerness, and the silent and sickly but indefatigable worker at his desk swayed for a number of years - the thoughts and opinions of the thinking portion of the people of Bengal. Scientific articles, moral instructions, accounts of different nations and tribes, stories of the animate and inanimate creation, all that could enlighten the expanding intellect of Bengal and dispel darkness and prejudices, found a convenient vehicle in the *Tatwabodhini Patrika*. The great *Prabhu*, conducted with all the ability and wit of the veteran Iswar Chandra Gupta, continued to be a favourite with orthodox Hindus of the old school. But the *Patrika* was conducted in a newer style, and struck a deeper cord in the heart of the young Hindu. It created a thirst for knowledge and for moral elevation, it awakened in rising generations a moral enthusiasm and a religious fervour, and it spread that spirit of reform and of progress of which Raja Ram Mohan Rai was the first great apostle in this century. The profound thought and the earnest tone of Akhay Kumar's writings struck even those who were intensely partial to English education in those days. It is said that the talented Ram Gopal Ghosh, one of the most brilliant students of the Hindu College, read one of Akhay Kumar's articles, and turning to his friend, the distinguished Ram Tanu Lahiri, remarked :- "Have you ever seen profound and thoughtful composition in the Bengali language? It is here."

For twelve years, Akhay Kumar worked indefatigably

for this paper. He formed a style of Bengali prose which for elevation, dignity and moral earnestness, has never been surpassed. He wrote articles some of which have since been separately collected and published, and are his best known works, like *Charapatha* and *Dharmamiti*. And for twelve years he was the apostle and the teacher of the party of progress and reform in Bengal. But nature could sustain no longer, and Akhay Kumar was prostrated by a disease of the head.

While Akhay Kumar distinguished himself by his writings in the *Tattvabodhini*, the venerable Vidyasagar also made his mark in literature by works, the like of which Bengal had not produced before. His great abilities, and his connection with the Sanscrit College and the Education Department, gave Vidyasagar immense influence and power, and he exerted that influence to reward real merit. He appreciated the talent and genius of Akhay Kumar, and when the post of Deputy Inspectors of schools was created, Vidyasagar offered one of them, with a pay Rs. 150 a month, to Akhay Kumar. The latter was then getting only Rs. 60 a month as editor of *Tattvabodhini*, but his duty impelled him to the task, and Akhay Kumar knew no higher pleasure in life than the performance of his duty. He therefore declined without a pang the more lucrative appointment offered to him.

But the philanthropic Vidyasagar would not be thwarted. When the Normal School was established in Calcutta, Vidyasagar settled with the authorities that Akhay Kumar would be its head teacher on a pay of

Rs. 200 a month. Akhay Kumar wished to decline this offer also, and it was only at Vidyasagar's strong and persistent request that he was compelled to accept it. The annals of literature are replete with stories of mutual jealousies between rival authors; it is with sincere gratification, therefore, that we record this evidence of cordial good feelings between Vidyasagar and Akhay Kumar,—feelings which reflect equal honour on both the great writers.

It was in 1855, that he withdrew himself from the work in connection with the *Patrika*, and became Head teacher of the Calcutta Normal School. But his disease became worse, and he had to resign the appointment after two or three years. The year which marked the death of Iswar Chandra Gupta witnessed the practical retirement of Akhay Kumar from all work.

He lived for nearly thirty years in enforced privacy and retirement. One great work issued from his retirement; it is an account of the Hindu sects, adapted from H. H. Wilson's English work, and prefaced by a long dissertation on the Hindu Aryans which is a masterpiece of learning and erudition; conveyed in forcible and graceful style.

After nearly thirty years of an inactive life, the talented Akhay Kumar passed away from us in 1886. He lived to see the fruits of his labour; and the generation which had grown up around him in his closing days had been educated on his works, imbued with that healthy knowledge which he laboured to spread, and with that earnest spirit of progress which he endeavoured to

infuse. He lived also to see the Bengali style, which he and Vidyasagar had dignified, made richer day by day by varied and meritorious works.

The great merit of Akhay Kumar's style is its earnestness, its surpassing vigour and force. We quote a few passages below,* and the reader will be able to judge for himself. This style is the man, and Akhay Kumar's

+ কিছুকালে ইতস্ততঃ জন্মানন্দর দূর হইতে এক অপূর্ণ মরোবর মেধিতে পাইলাম এবং তদর্শনার্থে আমার অস্বাস্থ্য কোতূহল উপস্থিত হইল। ক্রমে ক্রমে নিকটবর্তী হইয়া দেখি, কতকগুলি পরম-পবিত্র সন্তোষ-স্বামী কত মরোবর-ওটে বিচরণ করিতেছেন। তাঁহাদের অব্যাহত জগৎপাশ, একুর পবিত্র দুর্ভী এবং সংসার্য জগৎপাশে পড়ার অবলোকন করিয়া অশ্রুসিক্ত ঐতিহ্যে লাল কহিলাম। আশ্চর্য্য এই যে, উৎসাহিতের শরীরে কোন অলসতা নাই, অথচ অলসতারই উৎসাহের অলসতা হইয়াছে। বেধে হইল, যেন আমল-প্রতিমাগুলি ইতস্ততঃ প্রীতি করিয়া বেড়াইতেছে। আমি নিয়মপূর্ণ হইয়া মনে মনে বিবেচনা করিতে লাগিলাম, ইহারা দেব-কল্প হইবেন, তাহদের সংসার নাই। তখন বিদ্যা-দেবী শান্তির অলসতা পুরো-সর স্নেহ হাস্য করিয়া কহিলেন, তুমি দূষণ অনুমান করিয়াছ, ইহারা দেব-কল্পই হউন এবং এই ধর্ম্মাচল ইহাদের বাসভূমি। ইহাদের কাহারও মান দণ্ড, কাহারও নাম ভক্তি, কাহারও নাম কমা, কাহারও নাম অহিংসা, কাহারও নাম মেয়ী, ইত্যাদি সকলেরই নিজ নিজ তত্ত্বানুসারে বাধকরণ হইয়াছে। ইহাদের রূপ জুড়ন বিস্ময়। ইহারা যে পর্য্যন্ত স্থানীয়, তারা কি বলিব? বিদ্যারূপ-সাক্ষীদিগের মধ্যে বাহ্যিক এই ধর্ম্মাচল আরো-হণ করেন, তাঁহাদিগেরই স্রম সফল ও স্রম সার্থক হয়। তুমি এই সংসারের দান করিয়া শরীর দিচ্ছ ও স্বীকৃত পবিত্র কর।

বিদ্যা-দেবীর উপদেশানুসারে আমি উল্লিখিত শান্তি-মাগের অবগতন করিয়া অদ্বৈত পূর্ণ অতি নির্মল আনন্দ-মোহে নিমগ্ন হইতেছিলাম, ইতিমধ্যে নিজাক্ষর হইয়া দেখি, সেই স্থানর দাক্ষ-সেবিত হুতলা তুলেই শরীর হইয়া গিয়াছি।—[চাক্ষুঃ, তুচ্ছায় জগৎ, —বিদ্যা-বিষয়ক পর দর্শন।]

মহাবল পদাক্ষর্য্য-বিশ্ব-পূর্ণপুণ্ডরীক এক হস্তে হস্ত-যন্ত্র ও অপর হস্তে হস্ত-যন্ত্র গ্রহণ পূর্ণক, পূর্ণ-কলত্র-দৌহিত্রাদির অধ্বনী হইয়া, উৎসাহিত ও অশ্রুত মনে, প্রহ-পালিত গোবিন-সঙ্গে, ভাগ্যবৎ প্রবেশ করিতেছেন।

style reflects the true patriot and the earnest, enthusiastic reformer. Vidyasagar's style appears to us to be more finished and refined, Akhay Kumar's is more forcible and earnest. In Vidyasagar's style we admire the placid stillness and soft beauty of a quiet lake, reflecting on its bosom the gorgeous tints of the sky and the surrounding objects. In Akhay Kumar's style we admire the vehemence and force of the mountain

ইহা অরণ্য ও চিত্তান্ত করা, কি অপরিমিত আনন্দেরই বিষয়? ইচ্ছা হয়, তাঁহাদের আগমন-পর্ব্বতে অত্র-শাখ্য-সম্বন্ধিত মঙ্গল-পূর্ণ কলমাবলী সংস্থাপন করিয়া রাখি এবং সমুচিত সম্বোধন সমাধান পূরক, তাঁহাদিগকে আতি-শ্রদ্ধা সহকারে সজ্জন-পদম কবিজ্ঞানি ও সেই পূজ্য-পাদ শিষ্য-পুত্র-দ্বিগুণ দ্বিগুণ পদ্য-পুত্র-রসঃ গ্রহণ করিয়া কলমের পরিচয় করিতে থাকি। আর। আমি কি অবশ্যই অন্তর্যম্য প্রকাশ দ্বারা বলিতেছি। তখন আনন্দের অস্তিত্ব কোথায়। অমরা, তখন অসংগত-কাল-পার্শ্ব নিহিত ছিল। এই সমস্ত স্মৃতি-স্মৃতি বাননা এই স্থানেই অবসান-ইচ্ছা ভাল।—[তারত-ম্যে উপাসক-সম্প্রদায়, ১ম ভাগ, —আবোপদেশ-আবোপদেশ-প্রবণ।]

গীহাদের প্রবণ-দেখিয়া দয়ার উদ্দেশ্য হয় না ও লাভক-দেখিয়া অশ্রদ্ধার আধি-ভাব হয় না, এ বিষয়ে তাঁহাদের পরামর্শ-সিদ্ধান্ত। কবিজ্ঞান প্রবোধন নাই। গীহাদের কিছু লাভও হিতাহিত বোধ আছে, ও গীহাদের অন্তর্যম্য কল্পিতকালে কল্পনা-বলের মঞ্চ হয়, তাঁহাকেই সিদ্ধান্ত করি, "বিধবা বিবাহ প্রচলিত হওয়া উচিত কি না?" যিনি কোন নব-বিধবা তরুণী প্রাণে সন্দোহিত প্রিত-পতির শোক-মোহে মুগ্ধমান, ধরাতলে মৃত্যু ও অহর্নিশ বোলধামানা মর্শন করিয়া কাতর হইয়াছেন, তাঁহাকেই সিদ্ধান্ত করি, "বিধবা বিবাহ প্রচলিত হওয়া উচিত কি না?" যিনি দেখিয়াছেন, যে সাক্ষী-বিশ্বী মাস-ধর পূর্ণ-বাকী-নমাসে মনিনী ও পৌরষী বলিয়া স্ত্রীজনের নিকট প্রসিদ্ধ ছিল, সেই স্ত্রী মাস-ধর পরে একান্ত অনাথা ও নিতান্ত সহায় হীনা হইয়া দাম-ভাব, স্বর্গ-পতীরে, লাক্ষ্য-নরমে শিখণ্ডিত করিতেছে, এবং স্বামী-সম্পর্কিত বিষয়ে বাকী-বাকী-বাকী করুক নানা একারে নিপুণিত ও পরিহার্য-বাকী-বাকী-বাকী করুক উপেক্ষিত ও অপ্রসিদ্ধ হইয়া, কাতরকর-অভিবেশী-দ্বিগুণ দয়ার প্রবণ বিচার করিতেছে, তাঁহাকেই সিদ্ধান্ত করি বিধবা-বিবাহ প্রচলিত হওয়া উচিত কি না? [বিধবা বিবাহ।]

torrent in its wild and rugged beauty. Vidyasagar is the more accomplished master of style, Akhay Kumar is the more forcible preacher. Modern Bengali prose, as we understand it, has been shaped by these twin workers whose memory will be long preserved in Bengal.

We have said before that both these writers were enthusiastic in the cause of social reform. Vidyasagar's great work of reform was to ameliorate the condition of Hindu widows, and to legalize their remarriage. Akhay Kumar was compelled by his illness to retire early from the field of active work, and could not take a part in this noble movement; but the last extract which we have quoted below shows how earnestly, how intensely he felt on the subject. Every true-hearted Hindu must feel keenly on the subject; but it is given only to men like Akhay Kumar and Vidyasagar, who combine a manly courage with true tenderness of heart, to battle against unreasoning prejudices and heartless selfishness in the cause of reform.

It would be going somewhat beyond the scope of our work to indicate the influence which Akhay Kumar exerted on the Brahma Samaj to which he belonged. His biographer, Pandit Mahendra Nath informs us, that it was Akhay Kumar's uncompromising regard for truth which led him to question the infallibility of the *Vedanta*. He thought on the subject, and discussed it with his fellow-workers, until the Brahma community were at last persuaded to reject the doctrine of the infallibility of the ancient scriptures, while they still continued to

revere them as holy and venerable works, nobly fitted for our instruction and guidance. This was one of the most noted changes in the history of the Brahma Samaj, and it was due to Akhay Kumar, more than to any one else.

We are indebted also to Pandit Mahendra Nath Vidyanidhi for many passages from the writings and speeches of Akhay Kumar, which have never yet been published in a collected form, but which are instinct with eloquence and beauty. A complete edition of Akhay Kumar's literary works has yet to be published, and we look to the Brahma Samaj for the performance of this patriotic task.

OTHER RELIGIOUS WRITERS.

A host of talented writers continued the work when Akhay Kumar retired from the field. The venerable Debendra Nath Tagore continued to preside over the Brahma Samaj, and issued a series of religious works which have greatly benefited and dignified Bengali prose. Raj Narayan Basu, the companion and collaborator of Akhay Kumar, has enriched the language by a series of lectures and discourses mostly on religious subjects. The sons of Debendra Nath have distinguished themselves in literature and song, and the Bengali language will bear on it the impress of the work of this talented and cultured family. Keshab Chandra Sen and his section of the Brahma Samaj have followed in the footsteps of Debendra Nath, and have enriched Bengali literature by

sermons and lectures. And Pandit Siva Nath Sastri, who heads the third section of the Samaj, is also the writer of meritorious works. Thus modern Bengali literature owes much to the religious movement initiated by Rām Mohan Rai.



CHAPTER XVI.

ISWAR CHANDRA VIDYASAGAR.

1820-1891.

AKHAY KUMAR and Iswar Chandra were twin workers in the field of social reform and literary culture. Iswar Chandra began a little later than Akhay Kumar, but his endeavours were more arduous and more prolonged, and the scene of his struggles against social abuses lay not only in the arena of letters, but also in the arena of actual life.

Iswar Chandra was born in 1820 in the village of Birsinha, which was within the limits of Hooghly District at one time, but is now within the limits of Midnapur. He was the eldest son of his father Thakurdas Banerjee, who held a humble post in Calcutta on Rs. 10 a month. Like Akhay Kumar, he received his early training in his village Patshala, but was removed by his father to Calcutta at the age of nine, and was admitted in the Sanscrit College. Iswar Chandra suffered all the privations of poverty; he lodged in poor quarters, lived on poor food, cooked his own meals, and wore ragged clothes, while he was prosecuting his studies. And not unoften he suffered from the pangs of hunger, and went without a meal. Few of the thousands of students who prosecute their studies in our schools in the present day have any idea of the privations which poor Iswar had to go through, sixty years ago.



Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar.

In the midst of such privations, young Iswar Chandra distinguished himself by his remarkable intelligence, and generally held the first place in his class. He studied Sanscrit Grammar, Literature, Astronomy, Sacred Law, and Philosophy, distinguished himself by his compositions in Sanscrit prose and verse, and also picked up a slight knowledge of English. In 1839 he finished his education by passing an examination in Hindu Law, and obtained the title of Vidyasagar; and in 1841 he was appointed Head Pandit of Fort William College, on a pay of Rs. 50. It was then that young Vidyasagar began to improve his knowledge of English.

Five years later, when Akhay Kumar was swaying the ideas and opinions of thoughtful and earnest men in Bengal by his articles in the *Tatwabodhini Patrika*, Iswar Chandra was appointed Assistant Secretary to the Sanscrit College. The following year, 1847, witnessed the publication of his first literary work, *Betal-Panchabinsati*. The work marked an epoch in the history of Bengali prose, and the beauty and richness of Vidyasagar's style disclosed resources of the Bengali language which no one had suspected before. Nevertheless, like all first attempts, *Betal* had its faults; the style was too ornate, and a little too artificial.

Iswar Chandra was a man of great independence of character. His suggestions in some matters were not accepted by Rasamay Dutt,* then Secretary to the

* The proper spelling is *Dutta*. But we write the name as it is written by the members of this cultured family.

Sanskrit College and a leading man of his time, and Iswar Chandra resigned his appointment as Assistant Secretary.

He entered the Fort William College once more as a Head Clerk, and soon associated himself with the great and good-hearted Drinkwater Bethune in the cause of female education in Bengal. And in 1850 the management of the girls' school, called after Bethune, was entrusted entirely to the enthusiastic Pandit. In the same year he re-entered the Sanskrit College as Professor of Literature, in the post vacated by Madan Mohan Tarkalankar, of whom we have spoken before. But a higher honour was in store for him. Rasamay Dutt resigned his post about this time, the posts of Secretary and Assistant Secretary were amalgamated into that of Principal, and Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar was appointed the first Principal of the Sanskrit College.

Vidyasagar had now ample opportunities to reform the method of teaching in that institution, and his modern and easy method is appreciated by thousands of young Bengalis who have studied Sanskrit since. It became possible, under this method, to acquire a knowledge of Sanskrit without shutting ones-self out from all other learning and knowledge in the universe.

Educational work of all kinds crowded on Vidyasagar thick and fast. His friend Bethune died in 1851, and the Lieutenant Governor, Sir Frederick Halliday, placed the Bethune School under the management of Vidyasagar. The great scheme of establishing aided-schools all over Bengal was inaugurated in 1854, and Vidyasagar sub-

mitted his masterly report for carrying out that scheme. His plan was approved, and he was appointed Inspector of Hooghly, Burdwan, Midnapur and Nadiya on a pay of Rs. 200, in addition to Rs. 300 which he was now getting as Principal of Sanscrit College. He organized boys' schools in the four districts, established over 40 girls' schools in Hooghly and Burdwan, and superintended the work of the Sanscrit College and the Normal School in Calcutta. In the midst of these vast labours he never rested from his literary work; his *Sakuntala*, adapted from the Sanscrit drama of Kalidasa, was published in 1855.

But a task, mightier than educational reform and literary culture, now attracted the attention and the energies of the great and manly worker. Great as was his intellect, Vidyasagar's heart was yet greater, and the unfortunate condition of his countrywomen often affected him to tears. The wrongs of Hindu widows aroused his strongest sympathy, and he now prepared himself for a great movement to redress those wrongs.

It did not take a Pandit of Vidyasagar's learning much time to discover that the ancient Hindu scriptures did not enjoin perpetual widowhood; and in 1855 he startled the Hindu world by his work on the remarriage of Hindu widows. The excitement which the work, coming from the pen of a learned Brahman, caused among the orthodox Hindus of the day cannot be described. Abuse and vituperation were poured forth from all sides on his devoted head. pamphlets and publications purporting to point out his mistake were issued in quick

succession, songs were composed and sung in Calcutta and in remote districts, ridiculing Vidyasagar and his great endeavour. Amidst this storm of indignation which he had raised, Vidyasagar stood unappalled and unmoved. He issued a second book on the subject, replying to all the arguments which had been brought against his position, and replying to them with a wealth of learning and a facility of expression which silenced opposition, and practically closed the controversy ! Not content with this literary triumph, Vidyasagar associated himself with all the influential men of his time, with Prasanna Kumar Tagore, Ram Gopal Ghosh, Pratap Chandra Sishu and others, and appealed to Government to declare that the sons of remarried Hindu widows should be considered legitimate heirs. The Government of the day responded to this reasonable demand against unreasoning opposition and heartless selfishness, and the measure was passed into law in 1856.

But the reformer's work was only half done. Vidyasagar was not the man to sleep in the shade of his laurels. He raised subscriptions in the cause of widow-marriages, and the very year, in which the law was passed, witnessed the celebration of the marriage of a Hindu widow with Srish Chandra Vidyaratna, then Judge-Pandit of Murshidabad. Other instances followed, and some years later the indomitable reformer gave his only son in marriage with a widow. Never since the days of Ram Mohan Rai had Bengal witnessed such single-hearted devotion in the cause of reform, such triumph of humanity over the wrongs and abuses of centuries. Widow:

marriages have not been very frequent in Hindu society since that time, but the path is now open; and Hindu fathers who will have the courage to save their girls of tender years from life-long widowhood will bless the name of the great reformer for generations to come.

Vidyasagar did not long retain his appointment under Government. His great independence of character did not always please his superiors, and he resigned his appointments, worth Rs. 500 a month, in 1858. Four years after he produced his master work, *Nitar Sankar*, based on Bhavabhuti's finest drama in Sanscrit. Whether we consider the grace and elegance of the style, the skillfulness of the narration, or the tenderness and pathos which pervade the work, we must rank it among the noblest productions in Bengali prose.

Minor works proceeded from the pen of the veteran writer in quick succession, and were welcomed and adopted in schools all over Bengal. The princely income which Vidyasagar thus derived was devoted to the relief of suffering and distress. Hundreds of widows and orphans owed their living and education to his charity, every great cause, every worthy movement, received his support, and the greatest and richest zemindars of the land delighted to honour the venerable Pandit who lived a simple life, whose courage in the cause of reform was indomitable, whose kindness and charity were inexhaustible. The name of Vidyasagar became a household word all over Bengal, his charities were far-reaching and extensive, his help was sought for by those in distress and never sought in vain, and his books

were read by the young and the old. Vidyasagar was scarcely better known as an author than as a reformer and a philanthropist.

One more lofty aim attracted his attention in his later days. The system of polygamy, specially prevalent among the Kulin classes of Bengal, is degrading to men, and causes untold suffering to women, and the veteran reformer girded up his loins once more in the cause of reform. He published works proving that the ancient Hindu Sastras do not sanction polygamy without restriction, and are not as merciless to women as modern Hindu custom has come to be. Once more, orthodox Hindu society felt the blow from the gauntleted hand of the Pandit. Replies were attempted, and abuse was showered on the reformer in vain, for Vidyasagar stood unmoved. It was not possible however for the Government to prohibit polygamy by law, and the triumph of Vidyasagar in this instance remained only a literary triumph.

This was Vidyasagar's last great endeavour. The last fifteen years of his life were spent in well-earned repose, and the Government created him a Companion of the Indian Empire in 1877. His zeal for progress remained unabated, and he never hesitated to extend a helping hand to those who needed his help.* His

* My readers will pardon my citing a characteristic instance which concerns myself. When I commenced a translation of the *Rigveda Samhita* into the vernacular of Bengal in 1883, my endeavour to popularise the ancient scriptures met with a perfect storm of opposition from my orthodox countrymen. Among the few Pandits who encouraged me in the task was the venerable *Laxmi Chandra Vidyasagar*.

charities too continued unabated, and thus passed the closing years of the great author, reformer and philanthropist, until he died in 1891, lamented all over Bengal as no man has ever been lamented within our recollection. Monuments of marble and bronze lie scattered all over our metropolis in memory of men considered great, because they held high posts in their day. The monument of Vidyasagar is in the hearts of his countrymen, and will remain for ever enshrined in their grateful recollections.*

OTHER PROSE-WRITERS.

At the close of an account of Vidyasagar's life, some mention should be made of Bhudeb Mukerji, who succeeded Vidyasagar as an educationist, and has

* The following is a fair specimen of Vidyasagar's style :

লক্ষ্যকে এইরূপ পোকাঙ্কিত দেবিয়া, নীতা কহিলেন, বৎস। তোমার অপরাধ কি ? তুমি কেন অকারণে এত কাতর হইতেছ ? পরিচয় করিতেছ ? তোমার উপর কষ্ট বা অগুরুত্ব হইবার কথা দূরে থাকুক, আমি কারমনোযোগে দেবতাদের নিকট নিরত এই প্রার্থনা করিব, যেন জন্মান্তরে তোমার মত পুণ্যের দেবর পাই ; তুমি চিরজীবী হও। তুমি অযোগ্যার বিরা অধিপুত্ররূপে আমার এগান ভরনাইবে। ভবত, শতরু ও আমার ভগিনীদ্বয়কে সবেহ লক্ষ্যণ করিবে। বশদেবীর ভগবান্ ভক্তপুত্রের আশ্রয় হইতে প্রত্যগমন করিলে, ভীষ্মের চরণে আমার নাড়কপ্রণীত নিবেদন করিবে। বৎস। তোমার আর একটি কথা বলিয়া দি, আমি চিরজীবনী, বিধাতা আমার অশুভে দুঃখ নিধেন নাই ; সুতরাং আমার ,বে মনন্য গড়িল, তাহাতে আমি দুঃখিত নহি। কিন্তু এই করিত, যেন আমার ভগিনীগুলি ছুর লা পায়। তাহারা আমার বিভিন্ন অঙ্গরূপে পোকাঙ্ক হইলেক ; তাহাতে বরাণ তাহাদের শোকনিবৃত্তি

also written some works in Bengali prose. He was born in Calcutta, and was junior to Vidyasagar by five years; and he was educated first in the Sanscrit College,

হয়, সে বিষয়ে ত্রোহণা তিনজনে মতান্তর করিত; তাহায়া যথেষ্ট থাকিলেও, আমার অনেক স্থানে বিচারণ হইত। তাহায়াগকে বলিবে আমি অনুষ্ঠের ফলপ্রাপ্ত করিতেছি, আমার ভ্রাতা শোকাবুল হইবার ও ত্রোহণের করিবার প্রয়োজন নাই।

এই বলিয়া, প্রেরণের দ্বারা আমার আশীর্বাদ করিয়া, মীতা লক্ষ্যকে গ্রহণ করিতে বলিলেন। লক্ষ্য বাস্তবিক লোভনে ও গণন বহনে, আর্যে! আমার অপরাধ সাক্ষ্য করিবেন, অল্পবয়সকপূর্বক এই কথা বলিয়া, পুনরায় গ্রহণ ও প্রত্যাখ্য করিয়া নোকা প্রেরণ করিলেন। মীতা অবশেষে নগ্নে নিরীক্ষণ করিয়া রহিলেন। নোকা অগত্যা লক্ষ্যে তাহারই অপরাধের পাত্রে সংলগ্ন হইল। লক্ষ্য তাঁরে উত্তীর্ণ হইলেন, এবং কিয়ৎকাল নিশ্চল নগ্নে জনসম্মুখে নিরীক্ষণ করিয়া, অশ্রুনির্জন কহিতে কহিতে রণে প্রেরণ করিলেন। রণ কহিতে আরম্ভ করিল। রণ কণ বেগিতে পাত্রে আর, লক্ষ্য প্রত্যাখ্য নগ্নে মীতাকে নিরীক্ষণ করিতে লাগিলেন, মীতাও স্থির নগ্নে সেই রণে দৃষ্টপাত করিয়া রহিলেন। রণ ক্রমে ক্রমে দূরবর্তী হইল। তখন লক্ষ্য, আর মীতাকে দৃষ্ট করিতে না পারিয়া, হাহাকার ও শিরে ক্রোধাত্মক করিয়া যোজন করিতে লাগিলেন। মীতাও, রণ মননপথের অন্তীত হইবারাজ ক্রোধনিরহিত ক্রোধের দ্বারা, উত্তেজিত হইতে আরম্ভ করিলেন।

A more eloquent passage on the cruel custom of enforced widowhood is quoted below:

হা ভারতবর্ষ! তুমি কি হতভাগা। তুমি তোমার পুণ্ড্রজন সম্ভ্রানগণকে আত্মগতবে পুণ্ড্রত্ব বলিয়া সর্বত্র পরিচিত হইয়াছিলে, কিন্তু তোমার ইহানীকন সম্ভ্রানেরা খোজাখোজ আত্মক অবলম্বন করিয়া তোমাকে বেগল পুণ্ড্রত্ব করিয়া তুমিযাহেন, তাহা জবিয়া দেখিলে সর্বজনবোধে শোণিত প্রব হইয়া যায়। * *

হায় কি পরিতাপের বিষয়! যে দেশের পুণ্ড্রস্বাভিত দণ্ড নাই, ধর্ম নাই, ন্যায় অন্যায় বিচার নাই, হিতাহিত বোধ নাই, সচ্ছন্দনা নাই, কেবল সৌভিক রক্ষাও এখানে কষ্ট ও শয়ম ধর্ম, আর যেন সে দেশে হতভাগা অবলম্বনিত প্রবর্তন না করে।

and then in the Hindu College. After filling the posts of Head Master of Howrah School and Superintendent of Hooghly Normal School, Bhudeb became Assistant Inspector of Schools in 1862, and eventually Inspector of a Division in 1869. He was made a Companion of the Indian Empire in 1877, and a member of the Bengal Council in 1882, and in the following year he retired from service. He died in 1894. His earliest works are two historical tales in Bengali, adapted from a well known English book called *Romance of History*. His latest works are his three thoughtful *Prabandhas* or essays on domestic life, society, and ceremonial rites, which fill nearly eight hundred pages of his printed works.

Another historical romance is *Bangaship Parajaya* by Pratap Chandra Ghosh. Hara Chandra Ghosh succeeded Rasmay Dutt as Judge of the Court of Small Causes in Calcutta. Both were leading men in their time, and they were the first natives of Bengal who filled that high and responsible post. Pratap Chandra is the son of Hara Chandra Ghosh, and his work is connected with the story of the conquest of Raja Pratapaditya of Jessore, by Man Sinha the general of Akbar.

A more witty writer was Pyari Chand Mitra, and his *Alaler-gharer Dulal* is a social tale of Bengal. It has been translated into English.

The patriotic zemindar Kali Prasanna Sinha also wrote a satirical sketch on modern society called *Hutom Pekar Naksha*; but he has done more lasting service to

the cause of Bengali literature and modern progress by his meritorious translation of the Sanscrit *Mahabharata* into Bengali prose. The work had been translated into Bengali by the Pandits of the Maharaja of Burdwan some years before, but Kali Prasanna Sinha's translation is simpler and more literal, and is more acceptable to the public. He employed a number of Pandits to make this translation, and widely distributed the work, free of cost, among those who took an interest in the ancient epic.

The example of Kali Prasanna Sinha was not lost, and the *Ramayana* was published in original Sanscrit, with a meritorious prose translation into Bengali, by Pandit Hem Chandra Vidyaratna, in 1868 to 1885.

Kali Prasanna Sinha's *Mahabharata* and Hem Chandra Vidyaratna's *Ramayana* are the best prose translations of those epics in the Bengali language.

CHAPTER XVII.

DRAMATIC WRITERS. DINA BANDHU MITRA.

1829-1873.

KULINA-KULA-SARVASVA is said to be the first original dramatic work in Bengali. It was composed in 1854, and indicates the spirit of the times. The veteran satirist, Iswar Chandra Gupta, was still hurling his sarcasms on all social reforms, but the shafts of his wit fell pointless among the earnest workers of the day. The Hindu College was yielding its annual crop of young men with English education and western notions; Akhay Kumar had educated his countrymen in advanced ideas; and the great Vidyasagar had espoused the cause of female education, and was even then meditating his memorable attack on the cruel custom of enforced widowhood. It was at such a time, in 1854, that the first original dramatic composition, *Kulina-Kula-Sarvasva* held up the custom of Kulinism and polygamy to deserved ridicule and contempt.

The author, Ram Narayan Tarkaratna, was junior to Vidyasagar by three years, being born in 1823; and was educated in the Sanscrit College. He then became a teacher in the College, retired on pension in his old age, and died in 1885.

The history of the stage in Bengal deserves a brief narration. *Jatra* and other theatrical performances

of the old style were the pastime of our fathers, and *Kabi*, *Pachali* and *Half-Akrai* were then in fashion. But the *Sans-Sans* theatre was established in Chowringhee early in the century, and men like H. H. Wilson, the oriental scholar, and Hume, Magistrate of Calcutta, took part in the performances. Native Indian gentlemen witnessed these performances, and occasionally got up theatrical performances among themselves; and Shakespeare's plays were acted in English, or Sanscrit dramas were acted in Bengali translations. At the special request of Jotindra Mohan Tagore, (now Maharaja Sir Jotindra Mohan Tagore,) Ram Narayan's original drama *Kalina-Kula-Saraswa* was acted in 1856 in the premises of the Oriental Seminary. In the following year the eminent Kali Prasanna Sinha, translator of the Mahabharata, had his own translation of *Vikramorvasi* acted in his house with great pomp and magnificence, the translator himself taking a part on the stage. The performance excited a great deal of interest in the town.

It was then decided between Jotindra Mohan Tagore and Rajas Pratap Chandra and Iswar Chandra of the Paikpara Raj family to get up a permanent theatrical house on a grand scale for the encouragement of the Bengali drama. The scheme was matured, and Ram Narayan the author of *Kalina-Kula-Saraswa* was to compose a new drama. The magnificent garden house of Belgachia, belonging to the Paikpara Rajas, was to be the scene of the new theatre. No expense would be spared to make the scenic decoration, and the performance a success.

It was under such auspices that Pandit Ram Narayan's second drama, *Ratnavali*, was to be acted. But the Rajas had many friends among the European officials of Calcutta, and they desired to witness the performance. It was necessary to invite them; it was necessary to make an English translation of the drama in order to enable them to follow the acting.

This was the first introduction of the greatest literary genius of the century into the arena of letters. Madhu Sudan Datta was a brilliant student of the Hindu College. He had become a Christian and had gone to Madras, where he had worked as a teacher, and distinguished himself by his "Captive Lady" and other compositions in English verse. He had now returned to Calcutta and held an appointment in the Police Court. He was selected to translate the new drama for the English visitors, and he did it with credit and distinction.

At last in July 1858, the drama was acted under circumstances of pomp and scenic decorations which surpassed the utmost expectations. The Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal, the Judges of the High Court, and other high officials witnessed the performance. Every one was charmed with the acting; a new era was opened for the Bengal Drama.

Madhu Sudan's ambition was fired. He had written much in English verse, and had written with ability and poetic talent, but all attempts to court the Muses in a foreign tongue must be fruitless. His genius saw at a glance its true scope. Madhu Sudan who had hitherto never written a line of Bengali prose or verse,

Madhu Sudan who almost despised the Bengali language, —was impelled by his "vaulting ambition" to be a Bengali author! His friends laughed at the idea; they did not know what is possible for true genius to attempt, and to achieve.

Madhu Sudan was thus the first student of the Hindu College, properly educated in English, who turned to Bengali literature. All the renowned authors who had hitherto served their mother-tongue, Iswar Chandra Gupta, Akhay Kumar Datta, Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar and others, were men who had acquired an imperfect knowledge of English, mostly by their own endeavours. The *alumni* of the Hindu College had hitherto looked with contempt on Bengali literature, had written prose and verse in English, had hoped to distinguish themselves in English literature. The truth came like a flash of inspiration to Madhu Sudan Datta that true genius mistakes its vocation when it struggles in a foreign tongue. Madhu Sudan lived to correct his mistake and to be the most eminent poet in his own language. And since Madhu Sudan's time the *alumni* of our schools and colleges, —those who have sought literary fame and were worthy of it,—have won their laurels in their mother tongue.

The success of *Kalnagali* inspired Madhu Sudan with the idea of writing a Bengali drama. He went to the Asiatic Society's rooms, took away some Sanscrit dramas and Bengali works, read them, and pondered on them. He then put his hand to the task he had imposed on himself, and his genius carried him through.

The result was *Sarmistha*, one of the best and most beautiful plays in Bengali. The production was submitted to Prem Chand Tarkavagish a learned Pandit of the day, but Prem Chand returned it with the remark that it had sinned against all the rules of the Sanscrit drama! Madhu Sudan was then advised to accept the suggestions of Ram Narayan the successful author of *Ratnapati*; but he would have none of it, and only adopted some of his verbal corrections. He truly wrote to a friend on this occasion,—“You know that a man’s style is the reflection of his mind, and I am afraid there is little congeniality between our friend and my poor self. However, I shall adopt some of his corrections.”*

The drama was acted at Belgachia theatre with great success, Jotindra Mohan Tagore himself composing some songs for the piece.

Both Ram Narayan and Madhu Sudan lived to compose some more dramas. Ram Narayan’s *Naba Natak* is a clever hit on his countrymen who seek to indulge in the joys of wedded life at an advanced age, and marry girl-wives. Madhu Sudan’s *Padmarati* and *Krishna Kumari* are meritorious works, the latter being based on the story of the princess of Udaypur whose tragic fate throw a gloom over Rajasthan early in this century. Madhu Sudan then turned to blank verse and to epic poetry; and the story of his success in that line and of his life will be told in another chapter.

*See Jugendra Nath Basu’s life of Michael Madhu Sudan Datta.

As Madhu Sudan retired from the field of Bengali drama, his place was filled by a writer who has won a higher distinction in this department of literature. The new writer was Dina Bandhu Mitra. All the first three dramatists of Bengal were of nearly the same age; Ram Narayan was born in 1823, Madhu Sudan in 1824, and Dina Bandhu in 1829. Like Madhu Sudan Datta, Dina Bandhu was educated in the Hindu College; he distinguished himself in government service in the postal department; but he devoted his talents to the improvement of his mother tongue. He died in 1873.

The oppression of the Indigo planters of Nadiya and Jessore was the subject of complaint for many years; and our readers will find an extract which we have given from Iswar Chandra Gupta's poetry, in which the poet has indulged in a feeling appeal to the Queen of England against this oppression. The oppression however continued unchecked, and Dina Bandhu, who was born in Chauberia village in Nadiya District, had ample opportunities to note the doings of the planters and their subordinates. At last in 1860, he published his first dramatic work, *Ni Durpin*, anonymously, bringing together facts and incidents which had come under his observation, and weaving them into the main plot with the skill of a true artist.

The literary beauties of the work are by no means insignificant. An honest family and its most amiable inmates enlist the sympathy of the reader from the beginning, and at last wake in him the keenest sorrow for their misfortunes. All the members of the family

are well delineated. The old, simple-minded, affectionate father, the elder son managing the estate and the younger studying at a College in Calcutta, and their wives, the most innocent and amiable creatures in the world, have all been well delineated. Clouds gather on the horizon of their felicity and thicken as the story proceeds, and there are few readers who can read to the end without feeling deeply affected.

The sensation caused by the drama was great. The Rev. J. Long, a true-hearted missionary and friend of the people, translated the work into English in order to hold up to the powers that be, a picture of the oppression which was going on under the British rule, for the pecuniary benefit of British adventurers and speculators. This was too much for the European residents of Calcutta, and their organ the *Englishman*. A prosecution was instituted against the Rev. James Long, and he was thus immortalized. The memory of the benevolent missionary, who was fined and imprisoned in the case, is still cherished by the people of Bengal for what he did, and what he suffered for them.

High-handed exercise of power does not always perpetuate a wrong, and the wrong suffered by the raiyats of Bengal from the indigo planters was too glaring to be holstered up by an unjust prosecution. The Indigo Commission published a report and made disclosures which could not be gainsaid, and Sir John Peter Grant, the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal, did his best to befriend the raiyats. But the deliverance of the raiyats came from themselves, they combined, all over Nadiya,

not to grow indigo, and they submitted to every outrage rather than yield to the planters. Factory after factory failed in consequence of this combination, and the oppression of indigo planters is a thing of the past in the Nadiya District.

Nothing afterwards written by Dina Bandhu can compare with *Nila Darpan* from a literary point of view. In his *Nabin-Tapasini* and *Lilavati* there are undoubtedly fine passages, but still there is nothing to equal the pathos which pervades the *Nil Darpan*. In fact the most popular and the best known of Dina Bandhu's later productions like *Sadhabar Ekadasi* and *Jamai Barik* are popular and successful farces, and Dina Bandhu is known to his countrymen more as a humourist and satirist than as a serious dramatic writer. But there is a difference between Dina Bandhu's satires and Iswar Chandra's satires. Iswar Chandra is opposed to all social progress, and he pours forth his withering scorn in his own matchless verse on new-fangled ways. Dina Bandhu is not opposed to any section, he is too good-natured and good-hearted to attack any particular community, he only ridicules folly and vice. The lash of Iswar Chandra's satire cuts deep, Dina Bandhu's milder and gentler admonitions inflict no wound, but hold up vice only in its natural and heinous colours. Iswar Chandra is the more powerful satirist, Dina Bandhu is the pleasanter humourist. Iswar Chandra's ready and witty verse was the war cry of his party, and the barbed and pointed shafts of his vigorous if coarse sarcasms were the weapons of their

war. Dina Bandhu waged no party-strife ; his good-natured humour spread a sunshine of gladness around him, and his ridicule of vice and folly was appreciated by all.

Dina Bandhu also wrote some poems, which are distinguished by a harmonious flow of verse. One instance will suffice.*

* সুরপুর সমপুর শান্তিপুত্র বাবু,
 গার গার সট্টালিকা শোভা স্তম্ভিরাহ,
 কিতা বাট, কিতা বাট, কিতা সুলবল,
 যে কিলে চাহিয়ে বেধি জুড়ায় নহন।
 নিম্নবতি করে লোক সংখ্যা নাহি তার,
 গৌরবাই দ্রবলি তাঁতি হাজার হাজার।
 শান্তিপুত্র ডুবে নাকী মরনের অরি,
 “শ্রীনাথরী,” “উল্লাসিনী” “সঙ্গীতসুন্দরী”।

নারি নারি কত নারী নবীন অপরী,
 চমিকেছে হাস্য মুখে পথ আলো করি,
 বাজিছে মোহন মল ঢকল চরণে,
 উড়িছে অঞ্চল চাক চল সমীরণে,
 মনোজব মনোরমা লমা রামগণ,
 হাসিল জানলে করি গলা বরশন,
 অঞ্চল পেঁচিয়ে কানে বাজিছে কোথের
 জাসাইল নব অল গজার উপর,
 একেবারে ক্ষতরামা জীহবে ডানিল,
 কবলে কমলে যেন কমন চাকিল।

ভালিগাড়া গুণগ্রাম বিপরীত পারে,
 - কুলীন বাসুন কতকে বলিতে পারে।
 গৌরব কুলীনগন বলে গল্প করে,
 “বাট বংশের মেয়ে আইবুক খরে”।

THE BENGALI STAGE.

Dina Bandhu lived to see the Bengali stage based on a permanent basis,—the patronage of the play-going public. The Bengal Theatre was started shortly before the death of the dramatist, and it has been succeeded by a number of theatrical houses, some of which leave little to be desired in orderly management, scenic decorations, and meritorious acting. The institution, which the Rajas of Paikpara wished to create and to foster in 1856 and in subsequent years from their own resources, became a permanent institution of the land before twenty years had passed; and it now looks up, not to Rajas and chiefs, but to an enlightened public for support. The *Kuddi*, the *Pachali*, the *Helf-Akrai* are things of the past; *Juteas* too do not attract crowds in the metropolis as they did before; the educated public

দে কনা। কুমারী ভাবে চিরদিন রয়,
 কুলীন বহনে আরে "উলকা মেহে" কর।
 এক এক কুলীনের শত শত বিয়ে,
 রাপিয়াছে নান খাম খাতায় লিখিয়ে।
 মিষ্ট র নির্দয় নীচ পামর কুলীন,
 আগুন ভবনে বসি ভাবনা বিহীন,
 কখন বদন ছীনা মীনা তারা দল
 শিশু গৃহে কাঞ্চালিনী চক্ষে বহে জল।
 জাতৃঘায়া জগল যুগে কথা নাহি কর,
 অধোমুখে অশাখিনী দিনা নিনি রয়,
 কখন পাটিকা বালা কতু হাসী হয়,
 অবু কি নুবেব আর যুগে উপজয়।

Siradhoni Kanya.

prefer to see modern dramas put on the stage with all the latest improvements and scenic decorations.

Among the successors of Dina Bandhu Mitra, whose name is legion, it will be enough to mention a few of the best. Manu Mohan Basu is the Nestor among the living dramatists, and his *Sati Natak*, *Harish Chandra*, *Ramabhakt*, and other plays will always be read with interest and profit. Jyotirindra Nath Tagore has written *Asramati* and various other plays, and the talented Rabindra Nath has composed *Raja o Rani* among other works. And lastly, Raj Krishna Rai has composed *Praklad Charitra* and some other popular plays, but is better known as the translator of *Ramayana* into Bengali verse. Some of our actors on the stage are also the writers of clever plays and meritorious farces.

But a really great dramatic genius has yet to rise in Bengal. The drama has not kept pace in merit with poetry and fiction, of which we will speak in the next two chapters.



CHAPTER XVIII.

MADHU SUDAN DATTA AND HIS EPIC POETRY.

1824-1873.

MADHU SUDAN DATTA is the greatest literary genius of this century, and the full record of his life, compiled by Jogendra Chandra Basu, is the most meritorious biographical work yet written in the Bengali language. This work will be our guide in the present chapter.

Madhu Sudan was born in 1824, in the village of Sagandari in the District of Jessore. His father Raj Narayan Datta had four wives, Madhu Sudan being the child of the eldest. Raj Narayan was a man of property and substance, and a pleader of the Sadar Dewani Adalat. Madhu Sudan remained with him in Calcutta, and was admitted in the Hindu College at the age of thirteen.

The Hindu College, which was established in 1817, effected a revolution in the ideas of the young Hindus of the day. They imbibed in that College a warm appreciation of western literature and western civilization, and brooked with impatience the unreasoning restrictions which modern Hindu customs had imposed on them. Trained under teachers like Derozio and D. L. Richardson, the first young men who came out from the Hindu College were fired with an ambition to reform all that was unhealthy, and to reject all that was hurtful, in Hindu customs and rules. The reaction



Madhu Sudan Datta.

against the restrictions of ages went perhaps a little too far, but we can scarcely regret this reaction to which is really due all the steady improvement and reform which have been effected in this century. One may laugh at the anglicised young collegiates of the first half of this century, but it was these young collegiates whose advanced ideas and training leavened the society in which they lived, and made the sober reforms of later times possible. Men like Kashi Prasad Ghosh, Ram Gopal Ghosh and Rama Prasad Rai, like K. M. Banerjee, Debendra Nath Tagore and Prasanna Kumar Tagore, were among the early students of the Hindu College, and the ideas which they received with their English education permeated the society in which they lived. The writings of Akhay Kumar Datta reflected the progress infused into Hindu society through the Hindu College. The reforms effected by Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar were possible only after Hindu society had been permeated with advanced ideas through a healthy English education. For a time the *ajunni* of the Hindu College stood aloof from directly taking a part in improving their national literature; they still indulged in dreams of distinguishing themselves in English. But the dream was dispelled in time, and when the ardent young collegemen espoused the cause of their own national literature, they achieved results which silenced their critics and astonished their best friends. The present century has produced nothing in verse comparable to that of Madhu Sudan and nothing in prose comparable to that of Bankim Chandra

Madhu Sudan remained in the Hindu College for six years, from 1837 to 1842, and distinguished himself among a band of young men who were remarkably intelligent. Pyari Charan Sarkar, Prasanna Kumar Sarmadhikari, Gobind Chandra Dutt, Shashi Chandra Dutt, Jagadish Nath Rai, Kisor Chandra Mitra, Ganendra Mohan Tagore, Bhudeb Mukerji, Raj Narayan Basu, and Bhola Nath Chandra were students of the Hindu College at the same time with Madhu Sudan ; and one of his fellow students writes that Madhu Sudan was the Jupiter among these stars of the Hindu College.

Like many young students of the Hindu College, Madhu Sudan began to write English verse, some of which has been preserved by his biographer. Love and misanthropy were the favourite themes in those times when Byron's poetry still held the world in thrall, but some patriotic poems, like that on king Porus, indicate that Madhu Sudan felt for his country like the other young men of his day. Permeated with western ideas, the young poet longed to visit Europe even in those early days, and was filled with an ambition for glory or a nameless grave in Albion's distant shore.

"I sigh for Albion's distant shore,
 Its valleys green, its mountains high ;
 Though friends, relations I have none
 In that far clime ! Yet Oh I sigh
 To cross the vast Atlantic wave
 For glory, or a nameless grave !"

Kidderpur, 1841.

It was during his college days that Madhu Sudan's father desired to give the young man in marriage, and a suitable bride was selected. Madhu Sudan objected,

but his father insisted on the marriage. This was the turning point in Madhu Sudan's life. He ran away to Christian missionaries, was concealed for four days in Fort William, and in February, 1843, was baptised and took the name of Michael Madhu Sudan.

This incident is only one more illustration of the maxim that senseless coercion leads to violent reaction. Madhu Sudan's father and mother were no doubt worthy people; but young Madhu Sudan must have contemplated with grief and humiliation the domestic arrangement under which his mother shared her husband's affection with three other fellow-wives. And when his father determined to marry him against his wishes and entreaties, the young man took the first step which offered itself to him to escape, and became a Christian. The history of social reforms in the present century illustrates the truth that great abuses lead to reform, senseless coercion leads to reaction.

Madhu Sudan now studied in the Bishop's College for four years, his fond father still paying the expenses of his education. Madhu Sudan had learned English and Persian in the Hindu College; he now learned Greek, Latin and Sanscrit in the Bishop's College. Later in life he studied and learnt Telugu and Tamil in Madras, he picked up French, German and Italian in Europe, and he had also some knowledge of Hebrew. Madhu Sudan was thus one of the most distinguished linguists among our countrymen.

The relations between Madhu Sudan and his father gradually became strained, and Madhu Sudan felt

himself lonely and without a friend in the world. Some Madras students attended the Bishop's College, and Madhu Sudan secretly resolved to leave his province and to try his chances at Madras. He secretly completed all arrangements, and in 1848, sailed for Madras.

His first days in Madras were days of poverty, wretchedness and distress. Poverty hapelled him to write to the local papers, and his elegant composition soon attracted attention. He once more launched into compositions in English verse, and the story of Prithu Rai, the last Hindu King of Delhi, and his bride Sanjura, formed the subject of his meritorious poem entitled the *Captive Lady*, which was published in 1849.

The publication excited the utmost interest in Madras, and an English reviewer wrote in the Athenæum that it contained passages which "neither Scott nor Byron would have been ashamed to own." But if Madhu Sudan aspired to win a lasting literary fame by his English poetry, he found out his mistake before long. Even the great and good-hearted Drinkwater Beshune, to whom a copy of the poem was presented, wrote, and wrote truly :

"He could render a far greater service to his country and have a better chance of achieving a lasting reputation for himself if he would employ the taste and talents which he has cultivated by the study of English in improving the standard and adding to the stock of the poems of his own language."

A few days before the publication of his *Captive Lady*, Madhu Sudan had married the daughter of a European indigo-planter in Madras. Sweet indeed are some of the lines which the poet wrote on this occasion :

"Yes,—like that star which, on the wilderness
 Of vasty ocean, wooes the anxious eye
 Of lonely mariner,—and wooes to bless,—
 For there be hope writ on her brow on high :
 He reck's not darkling waves,—nor fears the lightless sky.
 "Oh ! beautiful as inspiration, when
 She fills the poet's breast,—her holy shrine :—
 Wooed by melodious worship ! Welcome then ;—
 Though ours the home of want, I ne'er repine,
 Art thou not there, even thou, a priceless gem and mine ?"

But the wedded life of the wild and wayward poet was not destined to be happy. Within a few years after his marriage he was separated from this first wife, and united himself with the daughter of the Principal of the Madras Presidency College. It was this second wife who stuck to him through life amidst all his weaknesses and misfortunes, and was the mother of the children he has left.

After a stay of eight years in Madras, Madhu Sudan returned to Calcutta in 1856 with his English wife. His ambition to distinguish himself by his English compositions had proved fruitless, and he was as helpless and poor as when he had left Bengal. He accepted the humble post of a clerk, and then of an interpreter, of the Calcutta Police Court. It was in these circumstances of distress that Madhu Sudan first turned to the composition of dramas in his own native language, under circumstances which have been described in the last chapter.

Madhu Sudan's first Bengali work *Sarmistha* appeared in 1858,—the very year which witnessed the death of his great predecessor, Iswar Chandra Gupta. Madhu Sudan's second drama *Padmavati*, appeared in 1859. The poet followed up his success by two clever

farces, unique in his time, one ridiculing the vices and follies of "young Bengal," and the other ridiculing the more dangerous hypocrisy and profligacy of "old Bengal." His successes fired him with a new ambition. He had formed high conceptions of poetry from his deep appreciation of Valmiki and Homer, and he felt within himself a call to imitate the lofty sublimity of those poets. But the jingling of the Bengali rhyme was ill suited to such attempts, and he remarked to his friend and adviser Jotindra Mohan Tagore, that there was no great future for Bengali poetry until the chains of rhyme were rent asunder. Jotindra Mohan replied that blank verse was scarcely suited to the Bengali language, and that even in the French language blank verse was not a success. But, replied Madhu Sudan, Bengali is the daughter of Sanscrit, and nothing is impossible for the child of such a mother ! In his enthusiasm Madhu Sudan promised to make the endeavour, and to prove that blank verse in Bengali was possible. Jotindra Mohan listened to the proposal incredulously, but promised to pay for the publication of Madhu Sudan's proposed work, if it was a success. Madhu Sudan set to work with his accustomed impetuosity and zeal, and the *Tilottama*, published in 1860, was the result of this historic conversation.

When this work in blank verse appeared, it took the literary world by surprise. The power of diction, the sublimity of conception, and the beauty of description could not be denied ; but nevertheless the reading

world wondered at the audacity of the writer and could not believe his work to be a success. Ridicule was hurled on the ambitious writer from all sides, contemptuous parodies were published, and writers of Iswar Chandra Gupta's school, as well of the modern school of Akhay Kumar and Vidyasagar, pronounced the attempt to be a failure ! The eminent Vidyasagar himself, ever ready to appreciate and encourage merit, could not pronounce *Tilottama* a success ; writers and critics of humbler merit and less candour ridiculed the writer and condemned the work.

Amidst this storm of opposition and ridicule Madhu Sudan stood unimposed. Never was the greatness of his genius, the loftiness of his purpose, the indomitable strength of his will, more manifest. He was resolved to prove by a higher endeavour and a loftier achievement that he was right, and that the world was wrong. It was a repetition of the story of Lord Byron whose earlier poems were condemned, and who retaliated with the might of a giant in his English Bards and Scotch Reviewers. Only Madhu Sudan retaliated in a nobler manner ; he did not abuse his critics, he convinced and silenced them by his success in a higher endeavour.

Among the few who pronounced Madhu Sudan's *Tilottama* to be a success was Jotindra Mohan Tagore himself. He acknowledged the beauty of the work, owned his defeat, and published the work at his own expense. The eminent Rajendra Lal Mitra, who was issuing the *Bibidharth-Sangraha* from 1851 for spreading culture and general information among his countrymen, was

another critic who recognized the success of *Tilottama*, And Raj Narayan Basu, the venerable collaborator of Akhoy Kumar Datta, was charmed with the noble performance. "If Indra," he wrote, "had spoken Bengali, he would have spoken in the style of the poem. The author's extraordinary loftiness and brilliancy of imagination, his minute observation of nature, his delicate sense of beauty, the uncommon splendour of his diction, and the rich music of his versification charm us in every page."

But a sceptical world had to be convinced, and the world was convinced by Madhu Sudan's grander poem, *Meghnad-Badh*, published in 1861. This time the critics were fairly convinced! The great Vidyasagar admitted his mistake with his accustomed candour, and acknowledged Madhu Sudan's genius and the success of his great endeavour. The voice of ridicule, though not completely silenced, failed to have any effect. All Bengal felt that a new light had dawned on the horizon of the nation's literature, that a genius of the first magnitude had appeared. The munificent Kali Prasanna Sinha, translator of the *Mahabharata*, was one of the strongest admirers of Madhu Sudan, and he convened a meeting of the literary society which he had established to honour the great poet. Rajas Pratap Chandra and Iswar Chandra, the cultured Jotindra Mohan Tagore, the talented Rama Prasad Rai and Digambar Mitra and many others were present on this occasion. Madhu Sudan was duly honoured, and the first edition of his *Meghnad-Badh* was exhausted within one year.

It was in this year, 1861, that Madhu Sudan published

his third drama, *Krishna Kumari*, of which we have spoken in the last chapter, as well as his sweet and musical but unfinished work *Brajangana*. And the following year witnessed the publication of the spirited epistles known as the *Birangana*. Within four years, from 1858 to 1862, he built up a literary reputation such as has not been equalled in Bengal in this century, or in any preceding century.

In 1862, Madhu Sudan Datta left India for Europe. He remained in Europe five years, was called to the Bar, and composed a book of Bengali sonnets which is well known to our countrymen. In 1867 he returned from Europe and began practice as a barrister in Calcutta.* He began well, but the poet was not fitted for the ceaseless endeavours and the prosaic duties of a lawyer's vocation. Madhu Sudan's liabilities increased, and his income dwindled away from year to year. His health failed, and his wife who was true to him to the last began also to suffer in health. Friends ceased to lend when there was no hope of repayment, his two children and his wife suffered the pangs of want before his eyes, and mental anxiety and bodily infirmities prostrated him in 1873. He laboured in his death-bed to obtain some pecuniary relief, and composed the

*It was in this year that I had the pleasure of first seeing the great poet. A friend who accompanied me was as great an admirer of Madhu Sudan's poetry as I myself, and Madhu Sudan did us the favour of reading some portions of his *Maghasad* to us. He was then, what, he always was in life, genial, kind-hearted, and good, but careless and imprudent. Misfortunes darkly closed over the last years of his life, and within six years after I had seen him so genial and so full of life, Madhu Sudan was no more.

Mayakanan, tinged with the tragic sadness which marked the close of his life.

Jay Krishna Mukerji of Uttarpara gave Madhu Sudan a home in that place, but the poet never recovered from the infirmities that were preying on him. He returned to Calcutta, and without a home to call his own, he took shelter in the charitable hospital of Alipur. Three days before the poet's death, his faithful and much-suffering wife Henrietta breathed her last. Madhu Sudan heard of this and with tears in his eyes repeated the sad lines from *Macbeth* :

"Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow
 "Creeps in this petty pace from day to day
 "To the last syllable of recorded time. &c.

He died on the 29th June, 1873.

It is not possible within our limits to review the different works of the great poet in detail, and it would be useless to review them cursorily. We will therefore confine our remarks to one of his works, *Meghanad Badh*, which is the greatest literary production of this century.

Meghanad Badh Kavya is a story from the *Ramayana*, and relates to the death of Meghanad or Indrajit, the most renowned and powerful of the sons of Ravana. Ravana stole the wife of Rama in his absence, and Rama with his brother Lakshmana crossed with a large army to Ceylon, and invaded Lanka the capital of Ravana. That great king sent army after army against the besiegers, but the adamant chain was not broken,

and every army and every general sent against the besieging force perished.

The first book opens with a description of Ravana's court, Ravana being sunk in sorrow at the news of the death of his son Birbahu and the destruction of the force sent with him against Rama. Ravana laments the death of all the great warriors who have fallen fighting against the foe, and compares his great city to a festive house in which the lights are one by one extinguished, and the merry sound of harp and flute hushed into silence. At his request the wounded soldier, who had returned from the battle, recounts the deeds of his son in a spirited description which rouses Ravana from his grief. He mounts on the walls of Lanka, reproaches the great ocean for wearing a fetter of stone to cross over Rama's army, and bursts into grief at the sight of Birbahu's corpse stretched on the field of battle. He returns to his palace which is suddenly filled with the voice of woe; Chitrangada the bereaved mother of Birbahu enters. She had been blessed, she says, with one priceless treasure, and had deposited it with the king, even as a dove deposits her young in the dark hollow of trees. The king is the protector of poor men's property, where is poor Chitrangada's treasure now? Ravana is stung with the reproach of his queen and determines on instant war. At his command the city resounds with the sound of war, and horses and elephants and cars and ranks of warriors fill the streets. Indrajit or Meghanad, the sole surviving son of Ravana, hears that his father has resolved to go to war in person.

He hastens to Lanka from his country seat, and is permitted by his father to lead the army.*

The second book is a description of the heavens. Indra is informed of Meghanad's resolution to fight Rama the next day. Meghanad is invincible in war, and Indra therefore repairs with his wife to the great and benign Uma to pray for the safety of Rama. The conversation that ensues breathes softness, and is worthy of the celestial speakers. Indra pleads the cause of the

* উত্তর করিলা তবে চাকনেজা দেবী
 চিত্রাঙ্গদা :—“দেবদেবী নাশে যে হুমরে,
 অন্তর্যমি অগ্নি তার ; ধন্য বলে মানি
 হেন বীর অশ্বিনের অন্ত ভাষাবতী ।
 কিঙ্ক জেবে দেখে, নাথ, কোথা লড়া তব ;
 কোথা গে অযোধ্যাপুরী ? কিনের কারনে,
 কোন্ লোভে কর, দাদা, এসেছে এসেলে
 রামের ? এ স্বপ্নলক্ষা দেখেন থাকি ত,
 অতুল কবনওলে ; ইহার চোদিকে
 রক্ত প্রাণীর সম শোভেন অনিদি ।
 অনেছি সরস্বতীরে বসতি তাহার—
 ক্ষুদ্র বহ । তবে হৈনসিহোদন আশে
 যুদ্ধিছে কি দাশরথী ? বামন হইয়া
 কে চাহে ধরিতে চক্রে ? তবে দেশবিশু
 কেন তারে বল, বলি ? কাকোদর মদা
 নমস্কর : । কিঙ্ক তাহে গুরুতর যদি
 কেহ, উদ্ধৃৎকণা যশী নরশে অহারকে ।
 কে, কর, এ কাল অগ্নি আলিয়াছে অগ্নি
 লক্ষ্যপূরে ? হায়, নাথ, নিম্নকক্ষ ফলে,
 মঙ্গলে বাক্সকুলে মহিলা আপনি ।”

virtuous Rama, robbed of his wife Sita by the unrighteous Ravana. The wife of Indra takes up the tale, and expatiates on the woes of Sita, now confined in a forest in Lanka, where she weeps day and night for her virtuous lord. Uma answers them with a gracious smile that her lord Siva favors the family of Ravana, and she is powerless to aid Rama. Suddenly a sweet fragrance fills the heavens, and the sound of distant bells is wafted in the air. Rama in distant Lanka is offering his prayers to the benign great Uma. Uma can resist no longer. She repairs to her husband Siva, interrupts him in the midst of his devotions, and obtains a promise that Lakshmana would kill Meghanad on the following day. A message is sent to the goddess Maya who sends down celestial arms to Rama. Rama is full of gratitude to the gods, and enquires how this debt can ever be repaid. Gratitude to gods, truly replies the celestial messenger, consists in supporting and cherishing the poor, in restraining the passions, in living in the paths of virtue, and in adherence to truth. The gift of sandal and flower and silken cloth is despised by gods if the giver is impure.

The third book is one of the most striking and beautiful in the whole work. Pramila, the wife of Meghanad, is disconsolate at the absence of her lord, and longs to leave her country-seat and repair to Lanka where her lord has gone. But the way lies through Rama's army, how can Pramila go? enquires her hand-maid. Pramila, no less favoured with valour than with beauty, answers with pride and indignation,

when the mountain-stream leaves her home for the ocean, who can obstruct her course? At her command her maids and attendants, all valiant warriors, conceal or heighten their charms by donning armour and grasping the martial spear, and martial music proclaims the march of the beautiful Amazona. Rama will not fight with women, he willingly and even respectfully lends a passage, and the radiant file of valour and beauty passes by, illuminating the darkness of the night. Rama, struck with the sight, can scarcely believe that it was not a gorgeous dream.

In fine contrast to the spirited descriptions of the third book, the fourth is full of pathos and tenderness, and dwells on the woes of poor Sita, now a captive of Ravana. One lady alone of Ravana's family, Serama, the wife of Bibhisan, sympathises with her, and repairs to her, and listens to her tales of former days. Sita narrates how after leaving Ayodhya with Rama and Lakshmana, she dwelt in the forest of Panchabati and enjoyed the forest life, how

* সন্নিলা নানক-বাল প্রহিলা সপনী ।
 “কি কহিলি, বাসন্তী ? শরৎগৃহ ছাড়ি
 বাহিরায় যবে নবী বিদুর উদ্দেশে,
 কবর হেন মাধ্য যে সে যোথে তার গতি ?
 নানক-বাসিনী আমি, নকস-কুল-বধু,
 বাবণ শত্রু বদ, বেধনার শারী,—
 আমি কি ভরাই, নবী, ভিখারী রাখবে ?
 পশির লঙ্কায় আমি নিম্ন জুর-বধে ;
 দেখিব কেমনে যোগে নিগারে মূৰ্ছনিও

wild flowers bloomed round her cottage and the sweet and joyous chirp of forest birds waked her every morning, how peacocks danced before her and wild deer came in herds as her guests, and how she hospitably entertained these innocent dwellers of the forest. She adorned herself by the margin of the lake with fresh flowers, and her dear lord, pleased with her new dress, would address her as the fairy of the woods ! Will poor Sita meet her lord again and serve him with her affection ?* The narrator can proceed no farther, she

* যথা গোমূবীর মুখ হুইতে স্থানে
 যবে পুত্ৰ রাহি যায়, করিলা মানকী,
 মধুরকাদিনী নলী আশেরে মল্লারি
 নয়নারে,—“হিতৈষিনী সীতার পরমা
 কুসি, নবী । পুষ্করথা শুনিবারে বসি
 ইচ্ছা কর, করি আমি, কন মন দিয়া ।
 “ছিহু মোহা, হুগোচনে, গোদাবরীকীরে
 কণোত কণোতী যথা উচ্চ-বৃক-চুড়ে
 বাধি সীত্ৰ থাকে জুখে ; ছিহু ঘোর বনে,
 নার পঞ্চনটী, মস্তৌ গুহ-বন-মম ।
 মল্ল করিতেন সেবা সঙ্গম স্থমতি ।
 মল্লক জাগার ঘার তারি দেখ মনে,
 কিসের অস্ত্রাশ তার ? যোগোচনে আমি
 নিকটা মল মূল বীর সৌমিত্রী ; হুগর
 করিতেন কল্ল প্রভু ; কিন্তু জীবনাশে
 মল্লত বিরত সখি, রাখবেল্ল নলী,—
 নয়নার ন্যায় নাথ বিদিত জগতে !
 কুলিহু পুষ্কর স্থব । রাজার নন্দিনী,
 রত্ন-কুল-বধু জারি, কিন্তু এ কাননে,
 শাইলু, সবনা গই, পরম পিরীতি ।
 কুটীরের চারিদিকে করত যে কুটিত

weeps bitter tears in woe. Sarina entreats her not to proceed further if those recollections give her pain; but poor Sita would fain proceed. The river filled by the rains pours forth its water on both sides, and the heart that is full of grief finds relief in imparting its grief to others. Sarina cannot choose

কুলকুল নিভা নিভা কহিব কেমনে ?
 লক্ষণটুকু-এক মধু নিঃসরি !
 জাগতে জাগতে নোরে জ্বলি জ্বলে
 শিক রাজ । কোমে রাণী কহ শশীমুখি,
 হেন চিত্ত বিনোদন বৈভাসিক গীতে
 বোলে আঁপি ? শিবীসহ শিবিনী হুসিনী
 নাকিত জ্বলন্ত নোর মর্কক, মর্ককী,
 এ পৌষার লম, রানী, আছে কি কণতে ?
 আঁতরি আসিত নিভা কহে করজী,
 ভুগাবিত্ত, বিহবন, স্বর্ণ অঙ্গ কেহ,
 কেহ শুভ, কেহ কাল, কেহ না জিত্ত,
 বদা বান্ধবের বহু মন-বদ-শিবে ;
 অহিংসক জীব বত । সেবিতাম নবে,
 মহাকরে, পালিতাম পরম বতনে,
 মরুকমে স্রোতধরী, জ্বলাকুরে মদ্য,
 আগুনি জ্বলনবতী বারিব প্রসানে ।
 মরনী আরসী মোর । কুলি কুলসহ
 (অনুগ) রতন নম) পকিতাম কেনে ;
 দাসিতাম কুলসহে ; হাসিতেন প্রভু,
 কনকজীবী বসি মোরে সন্তানি কৌতুকে ।
 হাহ, মনী আর কি মো পাব প্রাণনাথে ?
 আর কি এ পোড়া আঁপি এ ছুর মনবে
 বেগিবে সে না দুখানি—আমীর মরমে
 রাজীব ; নহনমণি ? হে দ্বাত্তণ বিবি,
 কি পালে পানী এ দানী জোবার মনোদৈ ?

but listen. In the forest of Panchabati, Sita heard the voice of fairies in sylvan sounds, and saw their dance in the glimmer of the sunbeams on the lake. Sometimes she would walk with Rama by the river, and view on her spacious bosom new heavens, new stars, new radiant moons. Sometimes she would climb a neighbouring hill, and there sit at the feet of Rama, even as a creeper winds round a tree. There she heard from him various discourses on sacred subjects, even as Uma hears the Vedas and the Puranas from the immortal lips of Siva on mount Kailasa. Will poor Sita hear the music of that voice again? Even now, in the solitude where she lives, she thinks she hears that voice,—will she never hear that music again? Thus Sita's story goes on. She narrates how in that forest Ravana went in the disguise of a beggar and stole her, how Jatayu obstructed his passage, how Sita fell into a swoon and dreamt a dream, how Ravana was victorious and brought Sita to Lanka.

In the fifth book, Maya, the goddess of illusion, sends a dream to Lakshmana. The vision comes to him in the guise of his mother, and asks him to worship Chandi at her temple situated in the north of Lanka. Lakshmana obeys, and Uma appears in person and blesses him. Meghanad also rises with the dawn from the embraces of Pramila, takes an affecting leave of his mother, and repairs to a temple to finish his devotions before going to war.

The sixth book describes the death of Meghanad, and is in our opinion about the weakest in the whole work. Rama has not the heart to let his brother go and

the work which we regret the most. The 'death of Meghanad is not worthy of him. In his anxiety to magnify the prowess of his hero the poet forgets that Lakshmana himself is also a warrior. In the original *Ramayana*, Lakshmana kills Meghanad in fair fight. Our poet arms Lakshmana with celestial arms, conducts him with another warrior Bibhisan to meet Meghanad who is perfectly unprepared, and even then, Lakshmana is struck down. The poet forgets that the prowess of a warrior is set off best by representing his formant as worthy of his steel, not by representing him as a child. Homer, from whom our poet frequently borrows his ideas, has not represented Hector as a child in order to adequately describe the prowess of Achilles.

The seventh book is in many respects the sublimest in the work. Siva, who is always inclined in favor of Ravana, is affected at the death of Meghanad, and sends a messenger to fill Ravana with his own prowess to give him a day for revenge. The minor gods descend in a body to assist Rama, nor is he unworthy of celestial assistance. Indra gazes on Rama as on a rival king of the heavens, and Kartikeya sees his own image in the young and bold Lakshmana ! Ravana's few dignified yet affecting words to the bereaved mother of Meghanad, his address to his army, the spirited conduct and reply of his troops, and the stirring description of the battle that ensues, find no parallel in the literature of Bengal. Nowhere, except in the pages of Homer, has battle between more than mortal combatants been so vividly, so powerfully

described. Ravana is intent on killing Lakshmana; the slayer of his son, and vain are the attempts to resist his course. Indra, the king of the heavens, cannot hurl his thunder, for a higher power checks him; and Kartikeya retires wounded and smiling when it is whispered to him that Siva has filled Ravana with his own prowess. Rama comes forward, but Ravana wants his brother Lakshmana and will not fight with the elder brother. Hanuman, Sugriva, and the other leaders of Rama's forces quail before Ravana, till the latter at last finds out Lakshmana fighting like a young lion, and they both eagerly mingle in a dubious combat. Gods and men gaze with wonder on the furious battle, and Ravana himself in the midst of the combat pauses in admiration of the valour and prowess of his young and undaunted foe. But none can oppose Ravana to-day, and Lakshmana falls as a falling star, the celestial arms sounding at his fall."

পলাইল সজসে চৌদিকে
 বৃন্দেন্দ্র, (জল যথা জালাল ভাঙ্গিলে
 কোলাহলে) ; দেবদল, তেম্বোহীন এবে,
 পলাইল। নয়নহ, ধূমসহ ধরা
 ব্যস্ত উড়ি অগ্নিকণা বহিলে অবলে
 পথল। সমুদ্রে রক্তঃ ছেঁড়িলা লক্ষ্মণে
 দেবাকৃতি। বীরমারে দুর্গম্ সমরে
 রাবণ; নাশিলা বনৌ হতকরে তরে,
 নাশিলা সৌমত্রে শূর মিত্রের স্রবরে,
 নাহে ধরা বস্তকরী মস্তকরি মাঝে।
 দেবদত্ত ধনুঃ ধবী উকাগিলা রোমে।
 "এতক্ষণে ত্রে লক্ষ্মণ" কহিল। দরোকে
 রাবণ "এ বর্ণক্ষেত্রে পাইলু কি ভোরে,

Who shall describe the woes of Rama on the dreadful night after the battle, when Lakshmana lay with other great warriors dead on the field? The eighth book commences with this touching scene. Stars twinkle

নরাধম ! কোথা এবে দেব বজ্রপানি,
শিখিলক শক্তিবহু ! রথুকুলপতি
জাতিভেদে ? কোথা রাজা হুগ্ৰীব ? কে ভোরে
রথিরে পামর আজি ? এ আনন্দ তালে
হুগ্ৰীব! মননী তোর কলহ উগ্ৰীব,
আন সৌহে । মাগে তোর মাংসাহারী হীনে
দিব এবে ; বজ্রশোভা স্তবিরে ধরনী ।
কুবলে নাথর পার হইলি দুর্ভাগি,
পশিলি বাকসালরে চৌরবেশ ধরি,
হবিলি বাকসলর অমূল্য লগতে ।"

পঞ্জিলে ভৈরবে রাজা বনাইল চাপে
অহিশিখা সম শর ; স্বীয় সিংহনামে
উজ্জ্বলী সীমনারী সৌমিত্রি কেশরী,
"বজ্রকুলে জয় মন, বজ্রকুলপতি;
নাহি ভরি আমি আমি ; কেন উনাইব
ভোমায় ; আকুল কুমি পুত্র শোকে আজি
যথাসাধ্য কর রথি । আশু নিধারিব
শোক তব, জেরি জোম, পুত্রবর যথা"

বাঞ্ছিত কুমুল রথ, চাহিলি বিষয়ে
দেব নর নোহো পালে ; কাটিল সৌমিত্রি
শরজাল হুগ্ৰীব হৃৎকার রবে ।
বহির্ভয়ে বজ্রকুলে কহিলি, "বাহাবি
বীরগণা তোর আমি সৌমিত্রি কেশরী !
পজিবরথিক শক্তি ধরিদ্ হুগ্ৰীব
তুই ; কিঙ্কনাবি বক্স আজি যের হাতে"
আর পুত্রবরে শুব হানিলা লগে
কুলাশক্তি ! বজ্রনামে উজ্জ্বল পঞ্জিলি,
উজ্জ্বলি অখর দেশ সৌমিত্রি কেশ,

in the sky, the battle-field is lighted by fires here and there, and Rama bemoans the death of Lakshmana, the companion of all his toils, the affectionate brother who had left his home, his wife, and his kingdom to attend on him. Uma is affected, and with the permission of her lord Siva, she sends Maya to take Rama to the realm of shades, where Rama's father will tell him the means of reviving Lakshmana to life. The poet borrows from Homer as well from Hindu mythology in his description of hell. Maya takes Rama through regions where sinners are punished after death. He then passes over to those happy regions where the good and virtuous live after death. There he meets his father who tells him of a medicine by which Lakshmana is eventually brought back to life.

The last book describes the funeral of Meghanad. A truce of seven days is granted by Rama at Ravana's request. Pramila mounts the pyre with the corpse of her lord after taking an affecting farewell of her maids and companions, and Ravana bursts into an exclamation of bitter, heart-felt grief, at the loss of the bravest of his warriors and the dearest of his sons.*

ভীষণ বিপুলান্বিতী ! কাশিলা মন্ডরে
 বেদ, মহা ! ভীষ্মাচারে পঙ্কিত কুতরে
 লক্ষ্মণ মন্ডরে যথা ; বাকিল অন্তরান
 দেব অস্ত্র, বক্তপ্রোচে আত্মহীন এবে ।

* অক্ষয়সিংহ বক্ষরাজ কহিলো কাতরে ;
 "ছিল আশা মেঘনার, দুদিব অস্ত্রিমে ।"

OTHER POETS.

Ranga Lal Banerji was a contemporary of Madhu Sudan, and his first work, *Pudminir Upakhyan* came out in the same year with Madhu Sudan's first work, *Sarmistha*, in 1898. It is a spirited poem on a well-known episode of Rajput history, and was much admired. It was followed by his *Karmadevi* and *Sunandari* ;

এ নবনয়ন আমি তোমার সমুখে :—
 নৈশি রাজ্যকার, পুত্র, কোমার, করিণ
 মহাবাহু। কিন্তু বিধি, বুদ্ধির কেননে
 তার নীচা। জড়াইলা সে যুগ আমারে।
 ছিল আশা রক্ষক বান্ধু সিংহাসনে
 জড়াইল আধি, বংশ, দেখিয়া কোমারে,
 বামে রক্ষকুল লক্ষী রক্ষারানী রূপে
 পুরবধু। যুগ আশি। পুতী কন্য কলে
 হেরি তোমা দৌড়ে আমি একাল আমনে।
 করুণি-পৌরব-রবি চির রাহুজালে।
 দেখিলু নিবেরে আমি বহু যত্ন করি,
 কতিতে কি এই ফল ? কেননে কিরিন
 হারিলে, কে করে মোরে, দিবিব কেননে
 লক্ষ্মীদামে তার ? কি দাম্বনাজলে
 লক্ষ্মীনিব মায়ে তব, কে করে আমারে,—
 কোথা পুত্র, পুরবধু আমার ? অধিবে
 হবে রাণী বলদাসী,—কি হুখে আইলে
 রাধি দৌড়ে লিঙ্কুতীরে, রক্ষকুলপতি ?
 কি কয়ে সুকান করে, হারবে কি করে ?
 হা পুত্র। হন নীরশেষ ? চিরজয়ী রূপে
 হা মাতা রাক্ষস লক্ষি। কি লাগে লিঙ্কি
 এ পৌড়া রাক্ষস বিধি রাক্ষসর ভাল ?”

but the fame of the poet was soon eclipsed by the brighter star of Madhu Sudan's genius. Ranga Lal died in 1887.

Among the many poets who are still spared to us, and who continue to enrich the Bengali language, we must single out three who stand pre-eminent. Hem Chandra Banerji is the Nestor among the living poets, and was born in 1838. His spirited verse, full of fire and of feeling, won the admiration of the reading public even when the fame of Madhu Sudan was in the ascendant; his patriotic Lyric on India is known by heart to a large circle of readers, and his more ambitious epic, *Britra Saubhar*, is instinct with beauty. But perhaps Nabin Chandra Sen has struck a still deeper chord in the hearts of his countrymen. His first great work, *Palasir Juddha*, came like a surprise and a joy to his countrymen, and pleased the reading public by its freshness, and vigour and its voluptuous sweetness. His great epic on Krishna is still in progress; and his last work *Anubhava* on the life and teachings of Buddha, somewhat after the style of Arnold's *Light of Asia*, sustains and enhances the reputation of the great poet of the Hindu revival of the present day. And lastly, Rabindra Nath Tagore, youngest son of the venerable Debendra Nath Tagore, has distinguished himself in poetry, drama and fiction, and his matchless songs are sung in every cultured home in Bengal. Some other poets have also distinguished themselves by their talent and genius. Pandit Siva Nath Sastri's *Nirbasiter Bilap* is a work of great merit, feeling and pathos. Ananda Chandra Mitra is an eccentric genius, and his *Helena Kalya* and

Mitra Kaḍya are written with feeling in forcible verse. Krishna Chandra Mazumdar's *Sadbhakti Satak* is a well-known and meritorious work. And Behari Lal Chakrabarti's *Banga Sundari* and other poems display power and feeling. A host of other writers have written meritorious works too numerous to mention.

It is a sign of the times that female writers have within the last ten or fifteen years entered within the arena of Bengali poetry. Foremost among them should be mentioned the name of Srimati Kamini Sen, now Mrs. K. N. Rai. Her beautiful verses collected under the name of *Ala-o-Chhaya*, (Light and Shade), portray the dignity of suffering and of work with a delicacy of touch and depth of feeling which are remarkable. Srimati Man Kumari's *Kumamajali* is a work of merit. Srimati Girindra Mohini Datta followed with her *Arunakana*, in which the unutterable woes of a Hindu widow are portrayed by one who has felt them, and can express them with power and with eloquence. To the same class belongs the poetry of Rani Mrinalini of Paikpara, whose *Nirgharini* is a marvel from the pen of a young widow of sixteen. Lines like those quoted below* strike a

* দুঃখের এ ভবনটী
কাহার ধরিব হাতে,
এ দুর্গম বন পথে
কে থাকে আমার সাথ ।
প্রতিদিন জেয়ে বেধি *
ভাসিয়া নদসার প্রান্তে ;
কত কাজে, স্ত্রি উদ্দেশে
কত লোক চলে পথে ।

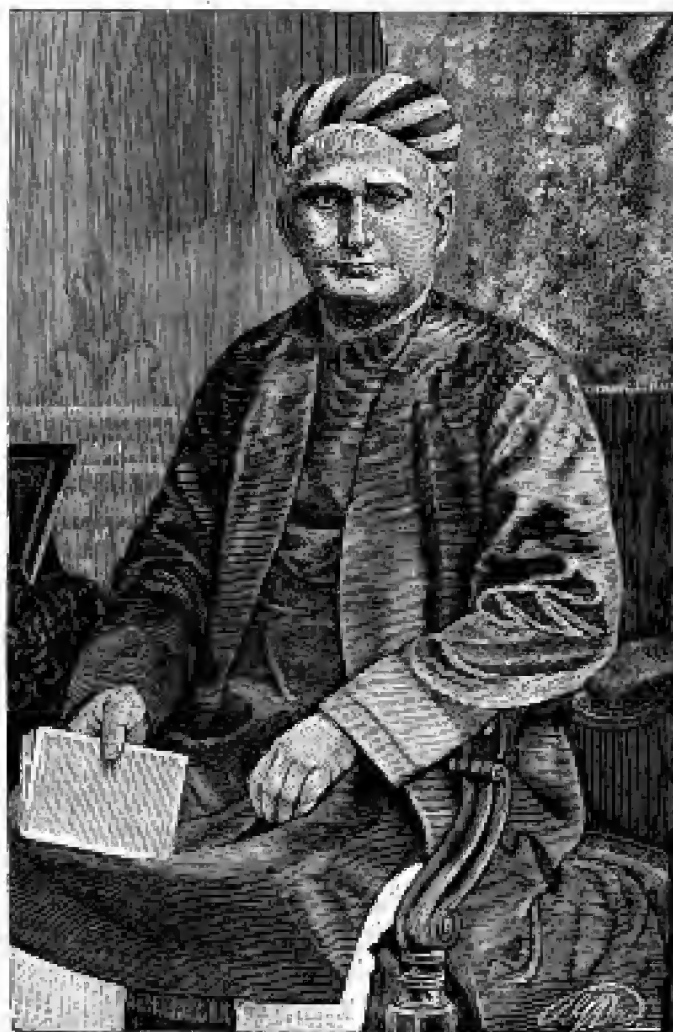
কেহ তারি একা বহ,
সবারই ঘোষার আঁচে ;
হাত ধরবেবি কবি
সেঁতলাতে চলিয়াহে ।
উদ্দেশ্য উৎসাহ হীন
আনি এক প্রান্তে গড়ে
কে হাত লাড়িয়ে দেবে
আমারে বরণী করে ।

cord in every feeling heart, and display a depth of despair and an eloquent simplicity of real sorrow, which our greatest poets can scarcely excel.

Thus the first emotion which has inspired our poetesses, and to which they have given eloquent expression, is one of suffering, of sorrow for the dead, of duty towards the living. These are sacred feelings which most forcibly to the female mind, and naturally enough our poetesses have received their first inspiration from these feelings. We welcome them in the field of literature and poetry, and we hope that as years roll by, and as they take an increasing share of literary work on themselves, they will also take a larger and more comprehensive view of life with all its varied feelings and hopes, joys and sorrows. For real life in its widest manifestation and its deepest meaning is the truest poetry,—real life, painted in those colours which gleam from the heaven of the poet's imagination, and turn the veriest dew drops into pearls !

নল্লী হীন হুব হীন
এ বিজনে পড়ে আছি ;
দুরারে ধাঁড়ারে কই
তোদের এসাদে আছি ।
যদিও একেলা আছি
তোমরা ত পর নও ;
দিতার সন্তান যদি,
আমার ত ওই হও ।

দেখ চেয়ে তের দিনা
একটা অধিনী ঘরে,
খর আভাশীর হাত
তোমরা করুণা করে ।
মাগে লও তোমাদের
এ দিল্লীও করুণাখে,
তোমরা যেন কাই যাই
অধুই বাসার প্রাণে ।



Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay

CHAPTER XIX.

BANKIM CHANDRA CHATTERJEE AND HIS NOVELS.

1838-1894.

BANKIM CHANDRA is in prose what Madhu Sudan is in verse,—the founder of a new style, the exponent of a new idea. In creative imagination, in gorgeous description, in power to conceive and in skill to describe, Madhu Sudan and Bankim Chandra stand apart from the other writers of the century; they are the first, the second is nowhere. And if the poet's conceptions are more lofty and more sublime, the novelist's creations are more varied, have more of human interest, and appeal more touchingly to our softer emotions. The palm must be given to the poet who has bodied forth beings of heaven and earth and the lower regions in gorgeous verse which sprang into existence like an echo to his ideas; but the reader, after he has traversed the universe on the wings of the mighty poet, will descend with a sense of pleasure to the homely scenes of the novelist, peopled with figures and faces so true and life-like, so sparkling and animated, so rich in their variety and beauty, that they seem to be a world by themselves, created by the will of the great enchanter!

Bankim Chandra was born in 1838, in the same year with the poet Hem Chandra Banerjee. He was the son of Jadab Chandra Chatterjee, who served Government

for many years as Deputy Collector, and then retired on pension. Bankim Chandra was educated in the Hooghly College and then in the Presidency College of Calcutta. The Calcutta University was now founded, and Bankim Chandra obtained his degree, and was the first B. A. in India.

In his early years, he with Dina Bandhu Mitra served apprenticeship in the *Prabodhak* journal under the veteran Iswar Chandra Gupta, and Bankim Chandra no doubt acquired much of his ease and facility of writing from this early exercise. Shortly after he had passed his B. A. Examination, he was appointed a Deputy Collector, and he served in different districts. But literary ambition was his ruling passion, and he laboured to achieve something new and great in prose as Madhu Sudan had done in verse. Both were inspired by European models but were sustained by their own genius, and both of them thoroughly assimilated new ideas with the spirit of their country's thought and literature. Madhu Sudan wrote a thoroughly Hindu epic, though inspired by Homer, and Bankim Chandra wrote novels of Hindu life, though his imagination was fired by the wonderful creations of the prince of modern novelists, Sir Walter Scott.

In 1864, appeared his first historical novel *Durgesh Nandini*, and the literary world in Bengal was taken by surprise, as it had been three years before, on the publication of *Meghnad*. The boldness of the conception, the skill and grace of the execution, and the variety and richness and surpassing freshness of the figures which live and move and act in this wonderful work, indicated

a creative genius of the highest order. Nothing so bold and original had been attempted in Bengali prose, nothing so powerful and so life-like had been executed in Bengali fiction. The venerable Vidyasagar had published his greatest work, *Sitar Banabas*, only two years before, and the work was an adaptation of a Sanscrit drama into Bengali prose. Within two years a new epoch seemed to have dawned on the horizon of Bengali prose literature,—an epoch of original works of the imagination, the like of which Bengal had not known before.

Bankim Chandra did not escape the ridicule which greets every new endeavour. Critics and disappointed writers poured forth their rage on the devoted head of the young author, his style, his conceptions, his story, were all condemned, and he was put down as a denationalized writer, an imitator of European models. But censure and invectives pass off, and a work of real genius stands unmoved like a rock rising above the waves. And after thirty years, the reading public of Bengal acknowledge *Durges-Nandini* to be one of the greatest works in Bengali literature.

The nineteenth century has indeed been a bright century for Bengali literature. But if we were called upon to point out the brightest decade within this century, we should unhesitatingly point to the ten years from 1854 to 1864. More original work, more substantial and lasting work, was done within that decade than either before or after. The eminent Vidyasagar inaugurated the great widow-marriage movement, and also published his

greatest work, *Sitar Banabas*, within this decade. Ram Narayan Tarkaratna began and Dina Bandhu Mitra completed the inauguration of the modern Bengali drama within these years. Madhu Sudan erected his monumental epic in blank verse, and Bankim Chandra founded his new school of fiction, within this memorable decade. It seems as if the literary activity of the century reached its culminating point in the decade closing in 1864. All the best works of the best writers, Vidyasagar, Dina Bandhu, Madhu Sudan and Bankim Chandra were crowded within those ten years.

Having won his spurs by his first endeavour, Bankim Chandra did let the grass grow under his feet. The weird and wild story of *Kapala Kundala* is perhaps a more wonderful creation of the writer's fancy than even his first great work. And *Mrinalini* which followed, although less sustained than its predecessors, is enlivened by some characters which only a true poet can conceive.

Eight years had now elapsed since the publication of *Durges-Nandini*, and in 1872, Bankim Chandra formed the idea of issuing a first class literary magazine in Bengali. The *Banga Darshan* was accordingly started, and under the editorship of Bankim Chandra, this new magazine rapidly rose in popularity and in fame.

The literary activity of Bankim knew no bounds: Turning aside from his favorite historical romances, Bankim Chandra began to publish in the *Banga Darshan* a social tale which soon attracted thousands of readers.

Bishu Brikhsh is the first and most powerful of Bankim Chandra's social novels. Beside this story, continued in the magazine from month to month, other articles animated by wit or replete with information of the most varied kind, and all written in Bankim Chandra's matchless style, soon made the *Banga Darshan* the most popular as it was the most ably written journal of the day. Bankim Chandra now became the sole king of the literary world as Iswar Chandra Gupta had been in an early part of the century, and his long rule continued for over twenty years till the day of his death. During this period Bankim Chandra had no equal and no rival. Madhu Sudan and Dina Bandhu died in 1873. Akhay Kumar and Vidyasagar had practically retired from literary work. Hem Chandra's greatest and best works had already appeared, and the sound of his harp was now rarely heard. And the younger generation of writers and poets looked up with veneration to the great author of *Durges Nandini* and *Bishu Brikhsh*, and submitted to his literary sway. Many of them wrote in the *Banga Darshan*, many profited by his example, advice and help, all owned him as their king.*

* It was in 1872, when the *Banga Darshan* was started, that Bankim Chandra suggested to me to write in my native tongue. As the incident throws some light on Bankim Chandra's zeal for his country's literature, the reader will pardon my narrating it. Bankim Chandra was a young Deputy Collector when my father, twenty years his senior, was an honoured and experienced Deputy Collector and was meditating retirement from service. Bankim Chandra was often in the same district with my father, regarded

Novels, social and historical, now came out in rapid succession from the fertile pen of the great writer, and his style, always rich and harmonious, became more and more simple and perfect with age. His *Dubi Chaudhurani* and *Ananda Matha* and *Krishta Kanter Will* and other novels, his lighter tales sparkling with the richest humour, and his social, historical and critical essays instinct with thought, found thousands of readers all over Bengal. Whatever he touched glowed with the light of his genius. For a generation the reading world feasted on his unceasing productions; Bengali ladies in their zenana bought every new work of Bankim Chandra as it issued from the press, and

him with the highest respect, and lamented his death, when my father died in the performance of public duty in 1861, like that of an elder and honoured relation. Bankim Chandra always took an interest in me, ten years his junior, and tried to enlist me in the cause of vernacular literature. It was in 1872, when we were talking about the *Banga Darshan*, that I happened to express my appreciation of some of the characters of Bankim's novels. "If you appreciate Bengali literature thus," said the veteran novelist, "why do you not work for it?" "I, write in Bengali!" said I with some surprise, "why, I have never written anything in Bengali. I do not know the Bengali style." "Style?" said he, "why, what a man of your education will write will be Bengali style, and your cultured feelings will do the rest." "You will never live by your writings in English," said he on this or on another occasion, "look at others. Your uncles Gohind Chandra and Shashi Chandra and Madhu Sndan Datta were the best educated men of the Hindu College in their day. Govind Chandra and Shashi Chandra's English poems will never live, Madhu Sndan's Bengali poetry will live as long as the Bengali language will live." These words created a deep impression in me, and two years after this conversation, my first Bengali work, *Banga Bijeta*, was out in 1874. When that work was issuing in another Bengali magazine, Bankim Chandra's *Chandra Sekhar* was appearing in the *Banga Darshan*. He wrote to me of my rival work with his utmost good feeling, and once wrote humorously, "I am crowding my canvas with characters;—it won't do for a veteran like me to be beaten by a youngster!"

young men in schools and colleges knew his latest utterances by-heart.*

In his later years, he began to write on religious

* The following passage from *Jurina* is a fair specimen of Bankim Chandra's later and simpler style of Bengali prose.

অনেক দিনের পর আমি যন্ত্র বাজী দাইতেছিলাম। আমি উম্মিল বৎসরে পড়িয়াছিলাম, “তথাপি এ পর্যন্ত যন্ত্রের স্বর করি নাই। তাহার কারণ, আমার পিতা ধনী, যন্ত্র দয়িত্ব। দিনাতির কিছু দিন পরেই যন্ত্র আমাকে লইতে লোক পাঠাইয়াছিলেন, কিন্তু পিতা পাঠাইলেন না; বলিলেন, “বিহাইকে বলিও, যে, আগে আমার জানাতা উপার্জন করিতে শিখুক—তার পর যত লইয়া যাইবেন—এখন আমার মেতে লইয়া পিতা পাঠাইয়াছেন কি?” শুনিয়া আমার হৃদয় মনে বড় ছুপা জড়িল—তাঁহার বয়স তখন ২০ বৎসর, তিনি অতিজ্ঞা করিলেন, যে যন্ত্র আৰ্যোপার্জন করিয়া পরিবার প্রতিপালন করিবেন। এই ভাবিয়া তিনি পশ্চিমাকালে যাত্রা করিলেন। তখন রেইল রুট নাই—শরিমের পথ অতি দুর্গম ছিল। তিনি পথভ্রমে, বিদ্যুৎ অর্থে, বিনা সহায়ে, সেই পথ অতিবাহিত করিয়া, পত্রাশে নিরা উপস্থিত হইলেন। যে ইহা পারে, সে আৰ্যোপার্জন করিতেও পারে। পানী আৰ্যোপার্জন করিতে লাগিলেন—বাড়ীতে ঢাকা পাঠাইতে লাগিলেন—কিন্তু সাত সাত বৎসর বাকী আসিলেন না, না আমার কোন সংবাদ লইলেন না। আমার যে মনরের ইতিহাস আরম্ভ করিতেছি, তাহার কিছু পূর্বে তিনি বাকী আসিলেন। রস উঠিল যে, তিনি কমিনেরিয়েটের (কমিনেরিয়েট বটে ক?) কর্তৃ করিয়া অতুল ঐশ্বর্য অধিগতি করিয়া আসিয়াছেন। আমার যন্ত্র আগার পিতাকে লিখিয়া পাঠাইলেন, “আগমের আনীর্জাদে উপেন্দ্র (আমার আমার নাম উপেন্দ্র—নাম বরিশাম, প্রাচীনত্বা মার্জনা করিবেন; হাল আইনে তাঁহাকে “আমার উপেন্দ্র” বলিয়া ডাকাই যন্ত্র)”—বহুমাতাকে প্রতিপালন করিতে লক্ষ্য। পাকী বেহায়া পাঠাইলাম, বহুমাতাকে এ বাড়ীতে পাঠাইয়া দিবেন। নচেৎ আজ্ঞা করিলে পুত্রের বিবাহের আবার সন্তান করিব।”

পিতা কহিলেন, সূতন শড়নাগুন বটে। পাকী ধানার ভিতরে কিংখোল মোড়া, উপরে রূপার বিট, হাতে রূপার হাঙ্গেরের মুখ। কানী দাবী যে আসিয়াছিল, সে গুরুত্ব পরিচয় আসিয়াছে, গলায় বড় মোটা সোনার মান। জারিজন কালো কাড়িওয়ান কোকপুবে পাকীর সঙ্গে আসিয়াছিল।

subjects. His great work on Krishna is written on the same lines as the thoughtful English work *Esse Homo*,

আমার পিতা হয়মোহন দত্ত দুনিয়ানি পড়িয়াছেন। হানিরা বলিলেন, “না ইন্দিরে। আর তোমাকে রাখিতে পারি না। এমন যাপ্ত, আমার নীত্ৰ লইয়া আসিব। দেখ, আবুল হুসে কল্যাপাত্ত মেখিয়া হানিতে না।”

Hankin Chandra's opinion on the question of the remarriage of Hindu widows is thus explained in his essays on *Widows or Equality*.

আমরা বলিব, বিধবাবিবাহ ভালও নহে, মন্দও নহে; সকল বিধবার বিবাহ হস্তগত করার ভাল নহে, তবে বিধবাসংখ্যের ইচ্ছামত নিগাধে অবিকার থাকি ভাল। যে স্ত্রী মাঝী, পূর্ণপতিকে আত্মরিক ভাল নাহিয়াছিল, সে কখনই পুনর্বিবাহের পরিণয় কবিত্তে ইচ্ছা করে না; যে জাতিসংখ্যের মধ্যে বিধবাবিবাহ প্রচলিত আছে, সে সকল জাতির মধ্যেও গণিত স্বতঃস্ফূর্তি, স্বেচ্ছা, লাঞ্ছনাগণ নিধনা হইলে কখনো আর বিবাহ করে না। কিন্তু যদি কোন বিধবা, হিন্দুই হউন, আর যে জাতিই হউন, পতির লোকান্তর গরে পুনঃপরিণয়ে ইচ্ছাবর্তী হইলেন, তবে তিনি অবশ্য তাহাতে অধিকারিণী। * *

আর একটা কথা আছে। অনেক মনে করেন, যে চিরবৈধবা হইলে, হিন্দু মহিলাবিশেষ পারিত্রিকতা একটা নৃহত, যে তাহার অনাশা কামনা করা বিধেয় নহে। হিন্দু ভ্রাতৃভাই হইলে, যে এই এক বানীর সঙ্গে সঙ্গে জাহার সকল তপ রাইবে, অতএব তিনি স্বামীহ জাতি অনন্ত অভিন্নতী। এই সম্প্রদায়ের লোকের বিশেষত্ব এই জন্যই হিন্দুগৃহে দাম্পত্য জীবনের এক আধিক্য। কখনো সত্য বলিয়াই না হয় স্বীকার করিলাম। যদি তাই হয়, তবে নিয়মটী একতরফা রাখ কেন? বিধবার চিরবৈধবা যদি লনালের মঙ্গলকর হয়, তবে স্ত্রীভাষ্য পুরুষের চিরপত্নী হীনতা বিধান করা কেন? তুমি বলিলে, তোমার স্ত্রীর আর গতি নাই, এমন তোমার স্ত্রী অধিকতর প্রেমশালিনী; সেইরূপ তোমার স্ত্রী বলিলে, তোমারও আর গতি হইবে না যদি, এমন নিয়ম হয়, তবে তুমিও অধিকতর প্রেমশালী হইবে। এবং দাম্পত্য জীব, গর্ভস্থ জীব দিগ্ধ বুদ্ধি হইবে? কিন্তু তোমার বেলা সে নিয়ম খাটে না কেন? কেবল অথবা স্ত্রীর বেলা যে নিয়ম কেন? * *

স্ত্রীসংখ্যের বিধবাধিকার সম্বন্ধে একটা কৌতুকপূর্ণ ব্যাপ্তি মনে পড়িল। কখনকখন পুরুষ হাইকোটে একটা বোকমদা হইয়া দিয়াছে। বিচার

and created a profound sensation in Bengal. Krishna, not as a deity but as a man, as the great Yadava chief who tried to avert war by his wise counsels and ever helped the cause of virtue,—this was the theme of his work. And he proved to the perplexity of his orthodox countrymen that the story of the amours of Krishna had no mention in the earliest works in Sanscrit literature, and is the mischievous fabrication of later poets. He

বিষয় এই অসম্ভবী স্ত্রী, বিদ্যাবাদিকারিণী হইতে পারে কি না। বিচারক অনুমতি কবিনেন, পারে। শুনিয়া যেনে চলতুল পড়িয়া গেল। যা। এককালে হিন্দুস্তানের সন্তীত ধর্ম লুপ্ত হইল। আর কেহ সন্তীতধর্ম রক্ষা করিতে না। বাহালি, মহাজন সমস্ত ধর্মের বিরুদ্ধে চাহে না—সাক্ষাৎ। মহিমে চাহার সহি করে না, কিন্তু এ ধর্মটি এমনই বর্মহানে বাড়িয়াছিল যে হিন্দুগণ আপনা হইতেই চাহাতে সহি করিয়া, জীবিকোন্মিলে স্বাধীন করিতে উদ্যত। প্রাচীন গ্রন্থান সংগ্রহপত্র, “হা সন্তীত। কোথায় গেল।” বলিয়া ইংরেজি লাকাল হুয়ে যৌনিক করিয়া, “তবে চাহা সে।” বলিয়া জ্ঞাপিতে লাগিলেন। শেষট। কি হইয়াছে জানি না, কেন না দেশী সংগ্রহ-পত্র পাঠ্যেরে স্বামরা ইচ্ছাক্রমে বর্জিত। কিন্তু যাঁহা এই যৌন, যাঁহারা এই বিচার অতি ভয়ঙ্কর ব্যাপার মনে করিয়াছিলেন, উহাধিককে আনোনির্গত একটা কথা মিজিয়া আছে। স্বীকার করি, অসম্ভবী স্ত্রী বিষয়ে বর্ণিত হওয়াই বিবোধ, তাহা হইলে অসম্ভবী পাণ বড় শাসিত থাকে। কিন্তু সেই সঙ্গে আর একটা বিধান হইলে ভাল হয় না, যে লক্ষ্যট পূরণ অথবা যে পূরণ সন্তীতির জন্য সন্তীত সংসর্গ করিয়াছে, সেও বিদ্যাবাদিকারে আশ্চর্য হইবে। বিবোধে বর্ণিত হইবার ভয় দেখাইয়া স্ত্রীধিককে সন্তীত করিতে চাহে—সেই ভয় দেখাইয়া পূরণধর্মকে সংপদে রাখিতে চাহে না কেন? ধর্মজন্তী স্ত্রী বিষয় পাইবে না; ধর্মজন্তী পূরণ বিষয় পাইবে কেন? ধর্মজন্তী পূরণ,—যে লক্ষ্যট, যে চোড়, যে মিথ্যাবাদী, যে অসাপারী, যে কৃতজ্ঞ, যে সকলেই বিবোধ পাইবে, কেন না যে পূরণ; কেবল অসম্ভবী বিষয় পাইবে না, কেন না যে স্ত্রী। ইহা বলি ধর্মশাস্ত্র, তবে অধর্মশাস্ত্র কি? ইহা যদি আইন, তবে কেআইন কি? এই আইন অস্বার্থ চাহা তোলা যদি দেশ বাৎসল্য, তবে মহাপাতক কেমনকর?

also took up the study of the Vedas, and felt himself instinctively drawn to the Hindu revival of the present generation, not to the noisy revival of ceremonials and forms and hurtful rules, but to the revival of the purer deeper and more catholic monotheism of the Hindus which alone can unite and strengthen the nation.

Bankim Chandra was made a Rai Bahadur, and a Companion of the Indian Empire by the Government, and died in 1894, lamented by his countrymen. Why is it that so few of our literary men live to the age of three score and ten ? Ram Mohan Rai died at 59 ; Iswar Chandra Gupta at 49 ; Dina Bandhu Mitra at 44 ; Madhu Sudan Datta at 49 ; and Bankim Chandra at 56. The fathers of Bengali prose literature, Akhay Kumar Datta and Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar lived approximately to the full period of human life, probably because they retired from labours early, and passed their old age in repose. Akhay Kumar died at 66 and Vidyasagar at 71.

These were the kings of our literary world in the present century, and the curious reader can mark the periods of their reign as precisely as the reigns of political sovereigns. I. Ram Mohan Rai reigned from 1815 to 1830, Raja Radha Kanta sharing his reign and ruling over the orthodox section. II. Iswar Chandra Gupta then reigned from 1830 to 1855, Akhay Kumar sharing his rule during the last twelve years. III. The venerable Vidyasagar then ascended the throne with his memorable movement for the re-marriage of Hindu widows, and his rule lasted till 1872, Madhu Sudan

and Dina Bandhu and Bankim Chandra sharing the rule. IV. And after a brief and regrettable war over the question of the abolition of polygamy, Vidyasagar abdicated the throne; Madhu Sudan and Dina Bandhu also died in 1873; and Bankim became the sole ruler, and reigned over the literary world for twenty two years.

OTHER WRITERS.

The stream of Bengali literature has broadened within the last thirty years, since the date of *Durga Nandin*, and it is difficult within our limits to give any account of this progress and development. The plan which we have pursued in the present work is to confine our remarks to the works only of the leading writers, and to briefly enumerate others who were their collaborators or contemporaries. We will follow this plan in the present chapter.

MAGAZINES. Literary magazines, some of great merit, have multiplied since the days of the *Banga Darshan*, but have mostly been short-lived. The *Ganankur*, the *Arya Darshan*, the *Bandhab*, the *Naba Jiban* and the *Prachar* were excellent magazines, but have ceased to exist. The *Bharati*, the *Nabha Bharat*, the *Sahitya*, the *Sadhana* and the *Janmadhumi* are among the best magazines of the present day. The first named journal is conducted by a lady, Srimati Sarma Kumari Ghosal, daughter of the venerable Debendra Nath Tagore.

NOVELS. The same lady is the author of *Dip Nirban* and a number of other meritorious novels, and it is a sign of the times that ladies have taken to writing works of fiction as well as of poetry. Sanjib Chandra Chatterjee, brother of the gifted Bankim Chandra, has written *Madhabilata*, *Kantamala* and other interesting novels, and Chandra Sekhar Mukerji's *Uddharanta Prem* is also a well-known work. One of the best of modern novels is *Swarnalata* by the late Tarak Chandra Ganguli, a simple and pathetic tale of social life in which the characters are powerfully delineated. Indra Nath Banerjee's *Kalpatera* is a humorous but realistic novel of Bengal village life. Damodar Vidyamanda has written *Mrinmayi* and a number of other stories, Chandi Charan Banerjee has composed *Monorama's Griha* and other moral domestic tales, and Chandi Charan Sen has published *Nanda Kumar* and other historical novels of orthodox proportions. Pandit Siva Nath Sastri, who has distinguished himself by his poetry and his religious works, has also composed *Mejo Bau* and other meritorious works of fiction; and Rabindra Nath Tagore, one of the foremost poets of the day, has composed short tales which bear the stamp of his genius. Debi Prasanna Rai Chowdhuri has written a number of interesting tales; and the veteran dramatist Manu Mohan Basu has written a meritorious tale about Ranjit Sinha, called *Dulin*. To complete the list, mention may be made of *Banga Bijeta* and three other tales of Indian History by the present writer, as well as his social novels, *Sansar* and *Samaj*.

ESSAYS, Bankim Chandra's thoughtful essays in the *Bangor Darsan* on literary, social and scientific subjects were largely read by his countrymen all over Bengal, and the example he set has been largely followed. Foremost among the essayists of the present day is Kali Prasanna Ghosh of Dacca, whose *Prabhat Chinta* and *Nibhrata Chinta* and other thoughtful essays are widely read and appreciated. Raj Krishna Mukerjee and Chandra Nath Basu were among the most eminent of Bankim Chandra's collaborators, and have written much that is valuable and thoughtful. Raj Krishna was a man of accurate scholarship and learning, and his *Prabandhar* are marked by a spirit of honest research. Chandra Nath Basu has distinguished himself more by his critical and social essays, like his *Sakuntala Tatva* and his *Hindutva*. Dwijendra Nath Tagore, son of the venerable Debendra Nath Tagore, has written much that is philosophical and thoughtful in his *Tatva Prakas* and other essays. Other writers of lesser note are adding to the stock of our current prose literature.

RELIGION AND ANTIQUITIES. The Asiatic Society continues to publish meritorious editions of ancient Sanscrit works, and many private Pandits and Editors are engaged in the same patriotic task. Our concern however is with Bengali translations and compilations, as they enrich the literature of Bengal, at the same time that they add to the store of our antiquarian knowledge. Pandit Satyavrata Samasrami is the profoundest Vedic scholar in Bengal, and has done much for the spread of knowledge by his editions and translations of

Yajurveda and *Sama Veda* and his researches in his journals. Mention may also be here made of the edition and translation of the *Rig Veda* by the present writer which caused a sensation among his orthodox countrymen in 1885. An abridged compilation and translation of the entire body of Hindu sacred literature by the same writer is now in course of publication under the title of *Hindu Sutra*. The late Dr. Ram Das Sen published a number of valuable essays on Indian antiquities, and Prafulla Chandra Banerjea has written on the Hindus and the Greeks. Mahesh Chandra Pal and Sitā Nath Datta have edited and translated the *Upanishads*, and Kailas Chandra Sinha is a laborious worker in the field of antiquities. Excellent editions and translations of the *Bhagavatgita* have been published by several writers, and the Bangabasi press has presented the reading public with a translation of the *Dharma Sūtras*, and is now publishing the *Puranas*. The enthusiastic Sisir Kumar Ghosh is engaged in writing a life of Chaitanya with all the fervour of a true believer, and other editors and translators, whose name is legion, are engaged in editing, translating and elucidating ancient works. Much of this work is perhaps superficial and even narrow in its scope and object, and is not therefore likely to last. But in spite of all that is sectarian and hollow, the increased attention now bestowed on ancient Hindu scriptures is likely to be attended with the best results, and will have the ultimate effect of drawing the people closer to the nourishing and life-

giving faith of the *Upanishads* and the *Vedānta* and the *Bhagavatgita*, which has been, and ever will be, the true faith of the Hindus.

HISTORY. History continues to be studied in English, and little progress has been made in this subject in the Bengali language, except in the matter of school books. Rajani Kanta Gupta's History of the Sepoy War is however a valuable and meritorious work, compiled from original sources.

SCIENTIFIC WORKS. Scientific instruction must also continue to be imparted in this country through the medium of the English language for a long time to come. Abinav Chandra Kabinatna's translations and editions of Sanscrit medical works deserve praise.

BIOGRAPHIES. It is a hopeful sign of the times that there has been a remarkable development in our biographical literature within the present generation. Some meritorious lives of the great men of other nations have been compiled, but the best biographical works in Bengali are the lives of Bengali authors. Pandit Ram Gati Nyayaratna's History of Bengali Literature is a praiseworthy compilation of the lives of our best writers. Nagendra Nath Chatterjee's life of Ram Mohan Rai is a meritorious work, but does not do full justice to its great subject. Mahendra Nath Vidyavidhi's life of Akhoy Kumar Datta, Jogendra Chandra Basu's life of Madhu Sudan Datta, and Chandī Charan Banerjee's life of Vidyasagar have been referred to in the preceding pages, and are exhaustive and excellent works which leave little to be desired.

POETRY AND DRAMA. Mention has been made of the living dramatists and poets at the close of the last two chapters, and it is needless therefore to enumerate them here.



CHAPTER XX.

GENERAL INTELLECTUAL PROGRESS,

Nineteenth century.

IN the last seven chapters we have traced the progress of Bengali literature in the nineteenth century ; it is a

Progress in Literature in the 19th century.

progress which we can contemplate with pleasure and with legitimate pride. Not a decade has passed but has brought forth new writers and a marked development. In the early tens and twenties, the great Raja Ram Mohan Rai carried on the work of progress, and the conservative section, headed by the learned Raja Radha Kanta Deb, stood up for ancient rites and customs ; and the result was the formation of a healthy and vigorous prose literature. In the thirties, the poet Iswar Chandra Gupta came on the stage, and enriched Bengali poetry with his flowing and witty and interminable verse, displaying a copious power of the language unsuspected before. In the forties, more earnest workers came on the field ; Akhay Kumar's dignified instructions, literary, scientific and moral, were listened to by the advanced school of readers in Bengal, and Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar began his manly work in the cause of educational, social and literary reforms. In the fifties, Ram Narayan Tarkaratna founded the school of modern Bengali drama, and the great Madhu

Sudan Datta erected his monumental epic in blank verse. In the sixties, Dina Bandhu Mitra developed dramatic literature, and Bankim Chandra began his new school of fiction and his long and brilliant rule in the world of letters which has terminated only with his death. In the seventies and eighties, new writers rose to distinction, and the genius of Hem Chandra, Nabin Chandra and Rabindra Nath sheds a lustre on the closing years of this eventful century.

But when we have spoken of the Bengali writers of the century, we have given only a partial and imperfect account of our country's progress. Englishmen are now the rulers of India, the work of administration and of the courts of justice is carried on in English, higher education is imparted in English, and the English is the one language in which the people of the different provinces in India can communicate with each other. Much of the literary work of our countrymen must therefore be done, and has been done, in English. Our most influential journals must be conducted in English, our best legal works must be composed in English, forensic eloquence can develop itself only in English, constitutional agitation and political work must be carried on in English, and even scientific and historical researches, meant for all the races of India and for European readers, must also be in English. It is necessary therefore to take a cursory view of the work done in English in order to grasp fully the progress made in the present century.

Raja Ram Mohan Rai was the first worker of the century in English as he was in Bengali; and his

**Ram Mohan Rai's
English writings.**

controversies with Christian missionaries and his essays on social questions display an extent of knowledge, a power of reasoning, and a mastery over the English language, which surprised distinguished English writers of the day. His controversies have now been well known forgotten, but his translations of the ancient Upanishads into English were among the first attempts to explore into Sanscrit literature and Indian antiquities.

Raja Ram Mohan Rai helped in the founding of the Hindu College in 1817. The first *annual* of the

**Hindu College and
compositions in Eng-
lish verse.**

College, however, left the path opened out by the eminent reformer, and for a time indulged in the dream of distinguishing themselves in English verse. Fired by the example of such men as Derazio and D. L. Richardson, and impelled by their ardent appreciation of western literature to which they had found a golden key, they employed their talents in contributing to English literature. Kasi Prasad Ghosh led the van, and his book of poems in English attracted much attention, as the first attempt of Young Bengal in English poetry. The talented Madhu Sudan Datta followed the example, and his *Captive Lady* published in Madras in 1849 has already been spoken of.

The Dutt family of Rambagan, sons and nephews of Rasamay Dutt, of whom we have spoken before, also entered this field, and soon left all competitors behind. The early effusions of Shashi Chandra Dutt and Govind Chandra Dutt received the deserved

compliment of a favourable review in England in Blackwood's Magazine. Shashi Chandra lived to compile historical and other works which have been published in ten volumes, and Govind Chandra with some of his brothers and nephews published the *Dutt Family Album* in England. His talented daughter Taru Dutt then wrote a small collection of *Lays and Ballads of India* which Edmund Gosse brought to the favourable notice of the British public. H. C. Dutt has written his *Lotus Leaves* and G. C. Dutt his *Cherry Blossoms*. O. C. Dutt still delights us with his sonnets and translations from the German and the French, and J. C. Dutt has published the *Indian Pilgrim* in Spenserian verse.

But the dream of earning a fame by contributions to English Poetry has now passed away, and Young

Indian Antiquities. Bengal has succeeded better in more practical subjects of study.

Not long after the time of Raja Ram Mohan Rai, Dr. K. M. Banerjea began his researches into Sanscrit learning. He embraced the Christian religion, and his perfect knowledge of Sanscrit and his command of a graceful English style made him an effective and powerful writer in the field of Indian antiquities. His *Dialogues on Hindu Philosophy* is a profound work, shewing a knowledge of the different systems of Hindu philosophy which very few scholars then possessed. But philosophical and scientific researches fail of their mark when they are made with the object of supporting a particular creed or faith, and Dr. Banerjea's work suffers from this reason, and has never been as acceptable

to scholars as it otherwise might have been. In his later days, Dr. Banerjee wrote another work, *Aryan Witness*, as profound as his first work, but marked by the same partizanship which takes away from its value.

Dr. Rajendralal Mitra succeeded him in antiquarian and scholastic researches, and soon acquired a European reputation by his learning. He started a cheap magazine called *Bibidharkha Sangraha* in 1851, in Bengal, for spreading useful information among his countrymen, but never succeeded well as a Bengali writer. On the other hand his researches into Indian antiquities were appreciated, and the Government of Bengal employed him, first in examining the ancient temples of Orissa, and then in examining the temple of Buddha Gaya. Two magnificent works, rich in photographic illustrations, and replete with information about the arts, manners and life of the ancient Hindus, were the result. In the meantime the scattered contributions of the scholar in learned journals were collected and published in two volumes, entitled *Indo-Aryans*, which will remain a monument of his learning.*

Less ambitious than the eminent Doctors were writers like Bhola Nath Chandra and Lal Bihari De who have

Works of information. embodied much useful information about their country in their excellent works. Bhola Nath's *Travels of a Hindu* continues to be a most interesting book of information

* I take this opportunity of acknowledging my great indebtedness to these volumes, in writing my work on *Civilization in Ancient India*.

about India, and Lal Bihari's *Peasant Life in Bengal* describes the life of the Bengal agriculturist in the guise of a pleasing novel.

In journalism, Harish Chandra Mukerjee took the lead about the middle of this century, and the ability,

Journalism. honesty and devotion with which he advocated the claims of his countrymen in the columns of the *Hindu Patriot*, which he founded, received deserved praise and recognition. Kristo Das Pal succeeded Harish Chandra worthily, and laboured for his country with real talent and sound judgment as the editor of the *Hindu Patriot* until the day of his death.

Journalism and public-speaking have gone hand in hand, and the people of Bengal have continued to

Public speakers. represent their wishes, and express their views and opinions, in the English language with marked ability. Ram Gopal Ghosh was the first great public speaker in Bengal, and he distinguished himself in the middle of this century by his eloquence and patriotism as the great tribune of the people. Surendra Nath Banerjee is a worthy successor of Ram Gopal Ghosh in the art of public speaking, and in the great work of the political advancement of his country. He has laboured steadily in this cause during the last quarter of the century, he has earned for his countrymen an increasing measure of self-government and of representative institutions, and his name will be associated by the future historian of Bengal with the political advancement of the people.

Political associations, strong in their influence and moderate in their representations, have also flourished in Bengal during this half century.

Political Associations. The British Indian Association, an association of zemindars, is the oldest representative public body in the land. The Indian Association has been founded later on a more popular basis. And lastly, the National Congress unites the representative and best educated men from all parts of India in the work of political progress, and carries on a constitutional agitation with moderation and ability.

Less loud, but not less deep, is the stream of religious and social progress which has broadened since the days of Raja Ram Mohan Rai. The task begun by him has been worthily continued by the venerable Debendra Nath Tagore, and the service he has done in continuing the work of moral progress cannot be overestimated. Trained under the moral influence of Debendra Nath, Keshab Chandra Sen founded a new section of the Brahma Samaj in 1863;

Brahma Samaj. and he and his followers will always be remembered as pioneers of social reform who, as a body, first ignored the caste system in the present century, and allowed inter-caste marriages. It is a fortunate circumstance that his life and teachings have been recorded by his friend and fellow-preacher Pratap Chandra Mazumdar in a work which is the best biographical work in English, written by a native of India. A third and more popular section of the Brahma Samaj was founded some ten years later, and the talented

Siva Nath Sastri and his colleagues are worthily carrying on the work of this advanced section of the Samaj.

The progress of the Brahma Samaj is an auspicious sign, because the Brahma Samaj really is an advanced section of the Hindu Samaj. One section of the Brahmas still call themselves Hindus, and all sections have adopted Hindu social and religious rites with some modifications, live Hindu lives, and derive their instruction from Hindu sacred works. The social progress of the Brahmas leavens the entire Hindu society, the two communities are drawing closer year after year, and when the young society will have counted its first hundred years of existence, its members will be reckoned as a section of advanced Hindus, as the founder of the Samaj meant them to be.

Among the Hindus, outside the pale of the Brahma Samaj, there has been a better understanding among

the different sections in recent
Hindu Reform. years. There is a desire on the

part of all sections, orthodox and heterodox, to draw closer together, and work for national progress and general good. The domination of the priestly caste which impeded the nation's progress is becoming feebler, the endeavour to bolster up priestly privileges is becoming fainter, the burfeful restrictions of caste are becoming weaker, among advanced Hindus in Bengal. There is a desire to sink social disunion, to ignore modern restrictions, and to turn towards the unpolluted religion and morality of the ancient scriptures to which modern Hindus are now turning for guidance.

There is hope in all this, as well as sign of progress.

In science, Young Bengal has not succeeded as well as he should have done. Excellent physicians have been

turned out from the Medical College, and students distinguished
Science and Industries.

for high proficiency in Chemistry and Physics, Mathematics and Astronomy, have come out of our colleges. But they have as yet given no indication of a capacity for original research. The want of costly instruments in this country may be one reason of this failure, the absence of a class of scientific workers is another. Dr. Mahendra Lal Sarkar's Science Association languishes for want of zealous workers, and the Industrial Association lately started has not yet perceptibly fostered industrial pursuits. Feeble attempts are made now and then in starting new industries, or renovating old ones under new methods. The spinning and weaving of cotton and jute, which grow so plentifully in this country, are done for us in England, and Bengal has not taken any appreciable share in cloth manufacture in which Bombay has set an example. Bengal has not yet distinguished herself in any way in science and industries under the influence of English education.

Law is a more congenial subject of study for the people of Bengal, and it has been remarked by so high an authority as Sir Henry Maine,

Law. that in this subject the nation has shewn something like true merit and genius. The ability, of which Prasanna Kumar Tagore and Rama Prasad Rai and other pleaders of their generation gave

evidence, attracted attention, and the highest judicial posts under Her Majesty's Government in India were soon won by the talented practitioners. Rama Prasad Rai, son of Raja Ram Mohan Rai, was appointed a judge of the High Court of Calcutta, but he did not live to take his seat on the Bench. Sambhu nath Pandit followed, and later on, the talented Dwarka Nath Mitra distinguished himself by his eloquence, learning and zeal at the Bar, and eventually made one of the soundest and best judges of the High Court. Other able men have succeeded him, and Sir Ramesh Chandra Mitra acted as Chief Justice of Bengal for a period. Among the Bengal Mahomedans, Sayad Amir Ali has won a seat on the Bench of the High Court, and has also distinguished himself by his learned works on the *Life of Mahomet* and on *Mahomedan Law*. But Sayad Amir Ali's works are not the only meritorious legal works composed by natives of Bengal in modern times. The munificent Prasanna Kumar Tagore has founded a chair for lectures on law ; and the lectures, annually delivered, mostly by natives of India, form a series of meritorious works on Indian Law.

In the work of general administration, the people of the country have been admitted to take a share with

Administration. greater caution, their efforts have been more arduous and prolonged,

and their success therefore is a matter of greater congratulation. The administration of India is unconsciously affected by party triumphs in England, and it was

when a strong and healthy liberal reaction gave the seats in the Parliament to the real representatives of the British nation in 1832, that a real share in administrative work in India was for the first time given to the people of Bengal by Lord William Bentinck. The class of men whom he appointed, Sub Judges and Deputy Collectors, soon distinguished themselves by their ability, capacity for work, and knowledge of their country, and the creation of these appointments has strengthened the Government, and brought British rule more in touch with the people.

In 1852, Lord Russell revived the question of Reform in England, and the second Reform Bill was passed in 1867. It was within these years that the Covenanted Civil Service was thrown open to all Her Majesty's subjects, and the first native of India entered the Civil Service. In 1862, Satyendra Nath Tagore, a son of the venerable Debendra Nath Tagore, passed the Open Competition held in England for admission into the Civil Service of India. An ungenerous alteration in the system of marking, which immediately followed, prevented other natives of India from succeeding for some years. In 1869 however, three other natives of Bengal and one native of Bombay passed the Open Competition. And since their time, young men are proceeding to England in increasing numbers, year after year, to compete for the Civil Service, to qualify themselves for the Bar or as Doctors or Engineers, or merely to complete their general education.

The third and last Reform act, equalizing franchise

in counties and boroughs, was passed in England in 1885. The wave of liberal reaction reached, as on previous occasions, as far as India, the Local Self-Government Act and the Municipal Act of Lord Ripon were passed between 1884 and 1886, and the people were thus admitted to a larger share in the administration of local affairs.

The training of our young men in England has been attended with beneficial results. Men who have entered

the higher ranks of services by passing examinations in England have taken, as Civilians, Doctors or Engineers, a responsible share

in the work of administration to which their countrymen generally are not admitted. Bengali Civilians have held the posts of District Officers, District Judges and Divisional Commissioners, Bengali Medical men have held the post of Civil Surgeons, and Engineers have risen to the rank of Executive Engineers. This direct enlargement of the share taken by the people of Bengal in the administration of their country benefits the people, and makes British rule stronger and more popular in India.

No less signal is the service rendered by those who have come out as members of the Bar. Mano Mohan

Bar. Ghose, who went to England with Satyendra Nath Tagore, came

out as the first Bengali Barrister. The poet Madhu Sudan Datta came out about the same time, and Womesh Chandra Bonnerjee came out shortly after, in

1868.- Madhu Sudan is dead ; but Ghosh and Bonnerjea are among the Nestors of the Bar at the present time. The service they have rendered to the country by helping the cause of justice and thus improving administration is great. But the service which they have rendered as workers for the political advancement of their countrymen is still more valuable. Younger Barristers are walking in their foot-steps, and our country owes and will continue to owe much to her talented and patriotic sons who have taken to the legal profession.

For the rest the great rush of our young men to Europe is silently causing a reform in our social rules. These young men ask no sanction from the leaders of the caste organization when they cross the seas and proceed

to Europe, or when they return and live among their friends and relations, and occasionally marry out of caste. Orthodox Hindu society is gradually becoming familiarized with such departures from old and cast-iron rules, and silently accepts the fact that a living society must be progressive. The best way to do a thing is to do it, says the proverb, and Young Bengal, educated in Europe, knows the truth of this proverb. Social reforms for which men like the venerable Vidya-sagar spent the best portions of their lives are being effected unostentatiously, without discussion in pamphlets and journals, and without the sanction of learned conclaves of Pandits. A deed done is worth more than years of idle discussion ; Hindu society feels it, and is gradually accepting the inevitable.

Young Bengal has his faults, and is not in want of "candid friends" to point them out to him. But his critics, who are so severe on his failings, know little of his difficulties and his struggles.

Conclusion.

Within the present century, Young Bengal has endeavoured to form a healthy national literature, has striven for social and religious reforms in the light of the ancient Hindu scriptures, has distinguished itself in law and administration, and works hopefully and manfully for the good of the country. There is reason for hope in all this, but there is more reason for earnest work in the future; and it rests entirely with ourselves to work out the results already foreshadowed. There is not a nation in Europe which has not shaped its own destiny by centuries of hard and arduous toil in past ages. We live in happier times, and under the influence of a healthier liberal opinion, and it rests with ourselves whether under these influences, and under the generous guidance of England, we shall move onward in the path of national progress, as all English colonies are doing in this age of progress.

FINIS.

